

THE ILLUSTRATED DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

MYSTERY



THE ONLY MAGAZINE OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD

AUGUST

10¢

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ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE for DILLINGER?

Why is Dillinger? Have the American homes, schools and churches failed? Parents of America should demand an answer to this problem of national importance!

SEE PAGE 24 IN THIS ISSUE

•
ALSO, THE WORLD'S BEST
MYSTERY FICTION BY

FERRIN FRASER • FREDERICK NEBEL
NORMAN MATSON • ELLERY QUEEN
GUY ENDRE • WILLIAM CORCORAN

•
ANOTHER COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
THE HOUSE OF SLEEP

A TOWER MAGAZINE

If Robert Louis Stevenson had
traded his pen for a camera...



Wallace
BEERY
Jackie
COOPER
IN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S
TREASURE ISLAND

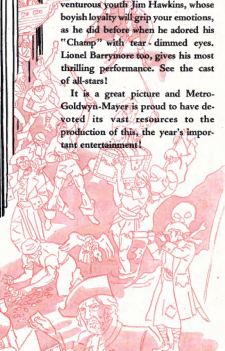
WALLACE BEERY *as Long John Silver*
JACKIE COOPER *as Jim Hawkins*
LIONEL BARRYMORE *as Billy Bones*
OTTO KRUGER *as Dr. Livesey*
LEWIS STONE *as Captain Smollett*
"CHIC" SALE *as Ben Gunn*
WILLIAM V. MONG *as Old Pew*
DOROTHY PETERSON *as Mrs. Hawkins*

Directed by Victor Fleming • Produced by Hunt Stromberg
of METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURE

Little did he know that one day his immortal story of "Treasure Island" would come to life... just as his other thrill-novel "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" captivated the world. Two million copies of "Treasure Island" have quickened the heart-beat of men, women and children.

Glorious news that each exciting moment has been recaptured to stir your soul! Wallace Beery is Long John Silver, and Jackie Cooper is the adventurous youth Jim Hawkins, whose boyish loyalty will grip your emotions, as he did before when he adored his "Champ" with tear-dimmed eyes. Lionel Barrymore too, gives his most thrilling performance. See the cast of all-stars!

It is a great picture and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is proud to have devoted its vast resources to the production of this, the year's important entertainment!



Isn't It A Shame!

SHE HAS A BIG HOUSE . . . A SUCCESSFUL HUSBAND . . . BUT OH, HER TERRIBLE TEETH!



Emily's house is a show-place—the finest house in town. And Emily is as gracious and lovely as her house is grand! But—there's a "but" about Emily!



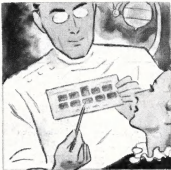
Emily's successful young husband would send to the ends of the earth to grant her smallest wish! But—the "but" about Emily gives her many bad moments!



When Emily goes to parties in other people's houses, she doesn't seem to "click." She feels left out of it all. For the "but" about Emily is her teeth!



Emily's husband should tell her what people notice about her teeth—that they look dingy and ugly. If only she'd go to her dentist . . .



He'd explain that it's "pink tooth brush" which is responsible—that she should clean her teeth with Ipana—and massage Ipana into her gums.



By the time Emily's gums were firm, her teeth would be good-looking again. She'd be attractive again! And she'd get plenty of compliments!

YOU, like Emily, should examine your teeth in a mirror, by bright daylight. If your teeth look dingy and ugly, "pink tooth brush" may be at the root of the trouble.

To be sure that your teeth are brilliantly clean and good-looking—do as many dentists suggest: clean them with Ipana Tooth Paste, and each time, put a little extra Ipana on your

Avoid "Pink Tooth Brush" with Ipana and Massage!

brush or fingertip, and massage it directly into your tender gums.

The foods of today are not coarse enough to stimulate the gums and keep them hard. Inactive gums often become tender, and sometimes bleed. This is "pink tooth brush."

Stimulate your gums and keep them firm with a twice-daily massage with Ipana. The ziratol in Ipana aids the massage in toning them. In protecting them against "pink tooth brush," you are safer from gum troubles like gingivitis and Vincent's disease. You can feel safer, too, about your teeth. Remember: Ipana for tender gums, and Ipana for clean teeth.

TUNE IN THE "HOUR OF SMILES" AND HEAR THE IPANA TROUBADOURS WEDNESDAY EVENINGS—WEAF AND ASSOCIATED N. B. C. STATIONS

IPANA
TOOTH PASTE



VISIT
"A CENTURY OF PROGRESS"

SEE IPANA MADE FROM START TO FINISH
See the Ipana Electrical Man. General Exhibits Group Bldg. No. 4—Chicago, June—October, 1934.

MYSTERY

ONE OF THE TOWER MAGAZINES

Catherine McNelis—*Publisher*

DURBIN LEE HORNER
Managing Editor

HUGH RYAN
Art Director

MARY MARSHALL
Director of Home Service

VOL. X, NO. 2

Cover Design by Harold Woolridge

AUGUST, 1934



GUY ENDORE

author of "The Werewolf of Paris" presents his first short story to MYSTERY readers—

TERRIBLE VENGEANCE

an amazing fantasy of nightmare horrors, and the beautiful gypsy girl

Page 19 of this issue

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Are You Responsible for Dillinger?

By John Roy Harrison 24

THE WORLD'S BEST MYSTERY FICTION

Terrible Vengeance.....	By Guy Endore	19
Murders That Couldn't Happen.....	By Ferrin Fraser	28
The Woman in Scarlet Stockings.....	By Norman Matson	32
The Sinister Beard.....	By Ellery Queen	36
Before Dawn.....	By William Corcoran	40
Killed After 10 P. M.....	By Frederick Nebel	44
Stained Rubies.....	By Rodney Blake	47
Matinee Murder.....	By Celia Keegan	55

GOSSIP FROM WASHINGTON

Off the Record.....By John Alexander 23

STARTLING REAL-LIFE MYSTERIES

Jam for Two.....	9
Little Book of Strange Crimes.....	27
The Ragged Gunman.....	52

EXCITING DEPARTMENTS

The Mystery of Edwin Drood, 8; I Go Sleuthing, 13; 300 Years to Make a Salad, 15; Pretty Girls Look Cool, 17; Gifts You Can Make, 35; Line-Up, 50; At the August Furniture Sales, 53; Say Thank You to the Grocery Man, 57; News of the News, 56; Make-Up Box, 74

Besides these 23 outstanding features, there is another new, complete, book-length novel in this issue—

THE HOUSE OF SLEEP • By Frank King (page 107)

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NO MORE *HOT* WASHDAYS FOR HER



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A PRODUCT OF LEVER BROTHERS CO.



Dead Man's LOAN

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page! The Episode of the Thirty Bodies!



HUGH ALCORN
Famous Prosecuting Attorney

FRANKLIN ANDREWS was a quiet little man who never did anybody any harm. On the day of his death he painted a picket-fence, whistling cheerily and swinging his brush with great gusto, for a man of seventy.

It was the thirtieth of May, 1914—unusually warm for that season in Connecticut, and the neighbors were not surprised to hear that Mr. Andrews' exertion at the fence had brought about a feeling of illness soon after he had his supper.

Andrews went to bed, and at eleven o'clock his sister in an adjacent town received a telephone call stating that he was ill but in no danger. Ten minutes after eleven Franklin Andrews was dead.

His was not the first death that year in the big rambling house in Windsor where the bustling and capable Mrs. Archer-Gilligan ran a semi-charitable Home for the Elderly. But deaths among the elderly are the rule rather than the exception, and nobody wondered.

Mrs. Archer-Gilligan summoned to the bedside of her dying "ward" no less a personage than Dr. H. F. King, county medical examiner as well as private practitioner, and Dr. King wrote a death certificate as "gastric ulcers."

All the same, it was pointed out to the editor of the state's most influential newspaper, the "Hartford Courant," that Mrs. Archer-Gilligan had recently lost two husbands—first Archer and then Gilligan—both of whom died suddenly and left comfortable amounts of cash and property. The Courant editor managed to place two elderly detectives in Mrs. Archer-Gilligan's Home, in the guise of "guests". These detectives found that the woman was kindly and well-meaning toward those elderly persons in her care—but they also discovered that almost without exception, those who entered the Home paid a lump sum in cash, in exchange for which they were to receive board, lodging, and all comforts for as long as they might live!

The worldly possessions of the dead Andrews, amounting to a few clothes and some books and papers, were shipped to his sister. This inquisitive soul, on going through the papers, discovered that Mrs. Archer-Gilligan had solicited him for a loan a few months before his death. Five days after the date on this scribbled memorandum, she discovered, Andrews had drawn five hundred dollars from what was left of his savings account. Putting two and two together, Andrews' sister demanded repayment of the loan from Mrs. Archer-Gilligan. At first the woman insisted that Andrews had given her the money as a voluntary contribution to charity. She thought it over for one night, and then sent back the five hundred.

It was a sad mistake. There was no proof of the loan, and Andrews' sister had nothing to show for it except a wild guess. Mrs. Archer-Gilligan had only to keep a stiff upper lip. But she didn't. Perhaps she thought that repayment of the loan she had so conveniently "forgotten" would keep Andrews' sister quiet.

If so, she was sadly mistaken. Now the good sister knew that something was wrong. She remembered also

that she had been told her brother was in no danger just ten minutes before, according to witnesses, he breathed his last. She appealed to the Courant, to Chief Egan of the State Police; and finally matters were placed in the hands of the great Hugh Alcorn, who made himself immortal by his conduct of the case against Gerald Chapman the bandit. Prosecutor Alcorn made painstaking and quiet investigations for more than a year. At every point he was met by the question—why should Mrs. Archer-Gilligan kill innocent old people? She had little enough to gain, and everything in the world to lose. Besides, she had just contributed a thousand dollars to help buy a new church organ.

Then one evening just at six o'clock, almost two years from the day when Andrews came in to supper after painting the fence, officers of Chief Egan's staff swooped down upon the kind and thoughtful Mrs. Archer-Gilligan and dragged her off to jail.

Townpeople surged to her support, and sympathy swelled until the facts were made public. In a period of five years the Archer Home, which was only one-sixth as large as the Hartford Old People's Home, had buried exactly the same number of inmates. Its death rate was more than six times too high!

Forty-eight deaths in five years—it was an impressive total. Then Prosecutor Alcorn made public another strange series of coincidences. Out of nearly thirty bodies exhumed—including the body of her own second husband—all showed traces of arsenic and most showed arsenic still in the remains in quantities heavy enough to poison the earth around the coffin!

The local druggist then remembered that he had sold Mrs. Archer-Gilligan, early in 1914, no less than a pound of arsenic, enough, as one commentator writes, to have wiped out a regiment. She was troubled with rats, she said. This strange woman did not even trouble to think of a fresh excuse for possessing the deadly poison—as have others, since.

There was hardly a graveyard in Connecticut which did not give up one or more of its dead in this premature Last Trump—mute, terrible witnesses against the woman who, claimed the state, had outdone La Tofana or the fabled exploits of Lucretia of the Borgias. The desire to "cut down overhead", and acquire the money set aside to take care of the old people, had been too much for her.

The defense, when her case came to trial, consisted of a weak attempt to imply that undertakers might have used arsenic in embalming, although it had been, even then, forbidden for years. But it was too much of a coincidence to suppose that all the embalmers in Connecticut had thus broken the law by accident.

Amy E. Archer-Gilligan was found guilty of premeditated murder, and sentenced to death, but the women of the state flew to her defense, maintaining that there had been no hanging of a woman in Connecticut for a hundred years—and the final result achieved was to place the condemned woman in a cell at Wethersfield Prison, where she remains today.

One wonders whether Amy Archer-Gilligan, as the gray years roll on, thanks them for their trouble.

**A SUAVE VILLAIN —
A DEEP MYSTERY —
A STUNNING GIRL —**

... That's all Bulldog Drummond wanted! And Scotland Yard spent the unhappiest hours of its life learning that Drummond ... as usual ... "got" his villain ... and got his girl!

JOSEPH M. SCHENCK
presents

Ronald Colman.



"in Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back"

with **LORETTA YOUNG**
WARNER OLAND • UNA MERKEL
• CHARLES BUTTERWORTH •

Directed by ROY DEL RUTH • Released thru UNITED ARTISTS
a DARRYL F. ZANUCK production



THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Dramatized by

BURTON E.
STEVENSON

Illustrated by NICK RILEY

Charles Dickens' mystery masterpiece, with Andrew Lang's solution! The world's greatest detective novels told for the first time in pictures!

A HAGGARD man pulled himself to a sitting posture on the dirty bed and looked about him with bloodshot eyes. He was in a mean little room, reeking with the fumes of opium. Beside him, in sodden sleep, lay a Lascar and a Chinaman. Through the ragged curtain of the narrow window, the first pale light of the day was beginning to penetrate.

The keeper of the den, a repulsive old woman known as the Princess Puffer, came toward him, a lighted pipe of opium in her hand.

"Another?" she asked in a rattling whisper. "Have another?"

The man waved her away, rose unsteadily from the bed, laid some money on the table, found his hat, and groped his way down the grimy stairs.

"He's a bad one!" muttered the Princess Puffer, looking after him. "He'll do murder some day, he will! There's somebody named Ned what he's allers threatenin' in his sleep. I'll folter him some day and find out who he is."

And taking a few puffs at the pipe, she fell back upon the bed, little dreaming that her sinister client was none other than John Jasper, the respected choir-master of Cloisterham Cathedral.

ON Christmas Eve, according to his custom, John Jasper entertained his nephew, Edwin Drood, in his apartment over the gatehouse of Cloisterham Cathedral. It was a cheerful apartment, in the living-room of which a fire blazed in an open fireplace. A grand piano stood in one corner of the room, heaped with music. The shelves were lined with books. Candles on the mantelpiece lighted the room. Also, on the mantel, stood an unfinished but lovely sketch of a girl, about sixteen years old. Edwin, a handsome young fellow who would soon be twenty-one, was an orphan whose father had betrothed him, as a boy, to little Miss Rosa Bud, also an orphan—the daughter of an old friend. The marriage was to take place when Edwin became of age, and he had planned to take her with him to

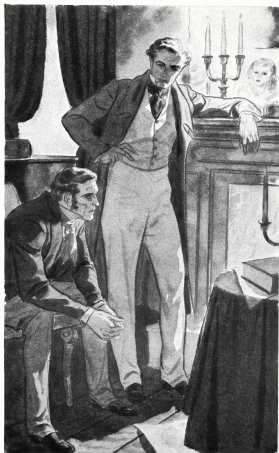
Egypt, where he had secured a position as engineer.

John Jasper was apparently very fond of his nephew, upon whom he lavished attentions and endearments, but whom he sometimes watched with a strange, sinister intensity. That evening, he was even more affectionate than usual, but suddenly a sort of fit seemed to seize him, as he sat in a chair by the fire.

"Good heavens, Jack, you look frightfully ill!" cried Edwin. "There's a strange film come over your eyes!"

"It is nothing, dear Ned," protested Jasper, faintly. "I have been taking opium for a pain—an agony—that sometimes overcomes me. The effects of the medicine steal over me like a blight. It will be gone directly." And in a few moments, he was all right again.

(Please turn to page 12)



JAM *for* TWO

*A famous true-life mystery drama—
complete on this page! The Strange
Episode of the Dried Clay and the
Blurred Finger-prints!*

THE life of the little widow, Mary Ennis, a quiet retiring female of uncertain years, was snuffed out quickly and brutally in London a few years back. The crime had all the earmarks of being a perfect one, for Mrs. Ennis was one who kept very much to herself and rarely, if ever, gossiped with her neighbors. It was a good three days, therefore, before neighbors realized that she was not about as usual and commenced to wonder why.

And then someone more inquisitive, perhaps, than the rest, forced the front door of the little red brick house, where she lived the life of a recluse, and found her strangled body lying on the kitchen floor. The cupboard had been jimmied. An empty cash box lay on the floor. Burglary, undoubtedly, was the motive of the crime.

To the Constable who took charge of the case pending the arrival of homicide experts of the famed C.I.D. of Scotland Yard, it looked very much as though the murderer of the little woman would never be apprehended. To begin with, he had several days' start in which to make good his getaway and, what is more, it did not appear as though he had left any worth-while clues behind.

The Inspector of the C.I.D. arrived, and with him a finger-print man. The latter went over the place, and shook his head dubiously.

"Nothing worth while here," he said.

"You're certain?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes, just some blurred prints on this jam jar."

Carefully he lifted the jar from the table in front of the cupboard.

"I see," said the Inspector. "Blurred, eh?"

He did not wait for an answer. Instead, he went broussing about the kitchen, examining the windows, the door, the chair and table, and finally the floor near the table. He gazed down for some time and then finally he bent over and picked up something. He gazed at it approvingly. It was a piece of dried clay.

"Here is our clue—this and the jam jar," he said briefly.

Back at Scotland Yard, laboratory sleuths took the dried scrap of dirt and subjected it to a chemical analysis. They also studied it under powerful microscopes, and compared it with various samples of clay they had on hand for just such emergencies. From their tests they learned that the mud was not London mud, but that it was clay of the same variety to be found in Dorking.

Meanwhile, the Inspector had been checking over the Yard's famous *modus operandi* classifications, wherein the idiosyncrasies of criminals are tabulated. The theory being—and invariably proved—that most criminals fall into a rut. One robs only churches; another, jeweler's shops. Some reveal themselves by their clumsiness; others, by their cleverness. Some smoke, some don't; some drink, others don't; and some have a fondness for jam.

The Inspector found the name of a burglar who did. An underworld character, named Jim Sully. And, what was even more enlightening, the records showed he had a sweetheart in Dorking.

It was all Scotland Yard needed. It took them two months to catch up with Sully, but when they did he swung from the gallows, betrayed by the mud from his boot and by his liking for jam.

Publishers Photo



Tell us.. ANOTHER

What Grocery Store salesperson
has been most **HELPFUL** to you?

HOW? WHEN? WHERE?

A TWO-WAY OPPORTUNITY:

- (1) To earn easy, quick cash, yourself
- (2) To help a Grocery Store salesperson win local and national FAME.

Pick from behind the counter of any grocery store in which you trade, the *one* salesperson from whom you have received the most *helpful* service. Put that salesperson's name on the official ballot on the right hand page of this announcement (or facsimile thereof). Then submit to TOWER MAGAZINES, New York, a letter of 50 words or less describing this enjoyable grocery shopping experience. Tell *what* you bought —*how* you were helped in making your purchase —*when* and *where* the incident occurred.

Help *yourself* to earn part of this \$1,000 which is available only to *August* readers of TOWER MAGAZINES. Help that neighborhood grocery store salesperson who has given you *friendly, helpful service*, win FAME in the 1934 Retail Sales HONOR ROLL sponsored by TOWER MAGAZINES!

\$1,000 IN CASH!

Help TOWER MAGAZINES Choose the
1934 RETAIL SALES HONOR ROLL

**Cash for TOWER READERS—
FAME for Store Salespeople**

Sit down immediately after reading this announcement over carefully and compose your letter of 50 words or less. Get it in the mail *today*—in plenty of time to be an August winner!

82 CASH AWARDS:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| (1) First Prize for the best 50-word letter..... | \$250.00 |
| (1) Second Prize for the 2nd best 50-word letter..... | 100.00 |
| (1) Third Prize for the 3rd best 50-word letter..... | 50.00 |
| (4) Fourth Prizes for the (4) next best 50-word letters .. | 25.00 ea. |
| (25) Fifth Prizes for the (25) next best 50-word letters.. | 10.00 ea. |
| (50) Sixth Prizes for the (50) next best 50-word letters... | 5.00 ea. |

(Awards given ONLY in accordance with rules stated in this announcement)

Courtesy—enthusiasm—knowledge of goods on display—honest desire to *help* you—these are the qualifications of the ideal Grocery Store salesperson.

You need not buy anything to compete. Letters will be judged on their merits: value of the salesperson's service to *you*—manner in which you tell of the grocery buying incident, etc. Keep your letter within the 50 word limit. Have both it and your ballot in the mail before midnight, September 15, 1934. Address Shopping Editor, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 Fifth Ave., New York City.

(Entries may be used by publisher in any manner desired and will not be returned.)

Duplicate awards will be paid in case of tie. Decision of judges final. Only *one* statement per person for each of the monthly Cash Offers in this series. Tower employees and their families are excluded.

A Program to Improve Relations Between Store Salespeople and Their Customers

TOWER MAGAZINES believe that in these three words—*Friendly, Helpful Service*—lies a basis for finer understanding between store salespeople and their customers. It is the basis upon which we want you to help us pick the 1934 Retail Sales Honor Roll.

Not only may you win an award yourself, but you may help bring *fame* to a grocery store salesperson in your community.

To All Grocery Store Salespeople:

Be courteous—*helpful*—always. The receipt in our office of 5 ballots bearing *your* name, admits you to membership in the 1934 TOWER Retail Sales HONOR Roll. You will be presented with an attractive *bronze* honor badge of identification. 10 ballots, similarly received, entitle you to membership and a *silver* HONOR badge. 25 ballots, similarly received, give you membership and a *gold* HONOR badge—highest recognition of all.

HOME • SERENADE

Tower

enjoyable shopping experience



By Ewing Galloway, N. Y.

10 FREE TRIPS TO NEW YORK

Each 1934 TOWER Retail Sales Honor Roll winner will be provided an opportunity to obtain still greater reward. A FREE trip to America's retail capital—New York—FAME as one of the nation's best ten retail store salespersons—This is the final goal for each of those best ten retail Salesmen or Saleswomen who write the best ten (50-word) statements on WHAT CONSTITUTES FRIENDLY, HELPFUL SERVICE. Be the Grocery Store salesperson from *your* city to earn this glorious visit to the center of retail activities! Civic and merchandising leaders will be here to acclaim you for your achievement!

NEW MOVIE • TOWER RADIO MYSTERY

Magazines

\$1,000 IN CASH

for August TOWER Readers!

FAME for Grocery Store Salespeople

Write about an enjoyable experience in which you received *helpful* service from a Grocery Store Salesperson. Follow suggestions on opposite page. Watch September issues of TOWER MAGAZINES, too... \$1,000 more in awards for buying experiences in a Department Store. You may try for each month's awards.

DEALERS: Beautiful two-color *Friendly, Helpful Service* Window Seals are yours for the asking. They will identify you as co-operating in this tremendous nationwide movement to improve store **SALES and SERVICE**. Write Ben Irvin Butler, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City.



**MAIL THIS OFFICIAL BALLOT TO
SHOPPING EDITOR, TOWER MAGAZINES,
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.**

Write, clearly, in this space, name of your most *helpful* Grocery Store Salesman or Saleswoman, together with name of store in which *he* or *she* is employed. Mail this official ballot (or facsimile) completely filled, to Shopping Editor, TOWER MAGAZINES, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

.....CHECK
(Grocery Store Salesperson's name) (Man?) (Woman?) WHICH

(Name of Store in which employed) (Department of Store)

.....CHECK
(Your Name) (Married?) (Single?) WHICH

(Your Address—Street, City, State)

(No. of children in your family) (Occupation of head of family)

Do you OWN?...or RENT?... (apartment?)... (house?)...
CHECK WHICH

The Mystery of EDWIN DROOD

(Continued from page 8)



MISS ROSA BUD was a pupil of Miss Twinkleton's "Seminary for Young Ladies" at Cloisterham. There Edwin called for her on the morning following his dinner with his uncle, and they set out for a walk together. "Oh, Eddy," sighed Rosa, "it is too absurd to be engaged to an orphan!"

"Perhaps we had better stop short while there is time," suggested Edwin. But she shook her head. "You mean that we must be resigned?" he asked.

"Yes, we must be resigned," she agreed. "Just the same, I know I shall hate the Pyramids!"

They had seated themselves on a bench not far from the door of the Cathedral, and presently the choir issued from it on the way to the chapter-house. John Jasper, the choir-master, came last, more sinister than ever in his vestments, and the glance he cast backwards at the couple on the bench would have made them shiver had they seen it.



ONE of the characters of Cloisterham was Durdles, a stone-mason, chiefly in the gravestone, tomb, and monument way, and so invariably drunk at night that he had employed a small imp named Deputy to stone him home. Jasper encountered him one night, with Deputy in attendance, just outside the high fence, surrounding the cathedral graveyard.

"I hear you have found another old tomb in the crypt, Durdles," said Jasper. "Oh, aye," answered Durdles. "I taps on the wall with my hammer and I finds 'em."

"You have the key to the crypt, haven't you?"

"Yes; here 'tis," and Durdles produced a large key from his pocket. "Here's another one," he added, showing a second key almost as large as the first. "It's the key to the Sapsea monument—that big one there," and he indicated a large tomb with an iron door just inside the fence. "I've been making some repairs."

"Indeed," said Jasper, deeply interested, and he took the two keys and struck them gently together. "Will you take me on a tour of the crypt some night? I should like to see you at work."

"That I will," agreed Durdles, "but don't forget to bring a bottle of the right stuff along," and he lurched away, Deputy in pursuit, while Jasper, his head bent in thought, returned slowly to his rooms.



THE Rev. Septimus Chrisparkle, athletic minor Canon of the Cathedral, had taken as a pupil a young man named Neville Landless, who, with his twin sister Helene, had arrived at Cloisterham a few days before. Helene was placed at Miss Twinkleton's, where she soon became a close friend of Rosa's. Both Neville and his sister were unusually handsome, dark and lithe, with something untamed about them. They were born in India.

Mr. Chrisparkle entertained them at dinner, one evening, and also invited Edwin Drood, Rosa Bud and John Jasper. It was evident from the first moment that Neville was greatly attracted by Rosa, and that he resented the casual way in which Edwin treated her. After dinner the company adjourned to the parlor where Rosa consented to sing, to Jasper's accompaniment. Helene noticed how closely he watched Rosa's lips, and suspected at once that he was in love with her.

The song went on; but suddenly Rosa's voice broke, she burst into tears, and shrieked out: "I can't bear this! I am frightened! Take me away!"

The little beauty was soothed after a time, and Helene took her tenderly home to Miss Twinkleton's, attended by Neville Landless and Edwin Drood.

(Please turn to page 14)

I Go Sleuthing

A new kind of department for new writers. Do you know any true, unsolved, "unwritten mysteries"? This magazine will pay \$100 apiece for the best solution submitted each month! Below is this month's prize winner! How about you? See page 97 for contest rules.

Illustration by Robert Everett

"I GO SLEUTHING"
WINNER FOR
AUGUST

V. B. WOOD
COLUMBUS, OHIO

ABOUT ten years ago, when I was graduated from high school, I was given, as one commencement present, a trip to see my favorite uncle, who was a detective in Copenhagen, a city of about twenty-five thousand inhabitants. As soon as I arrived, of course, I begged to go with him on some of his jobs, which I imagined would be highly thrilling adventures, without exception.

One day he stopped at the house and told me to come along. I was overjoyed at a chance to see how the master minds of the city police worked. My home was in the country, and I was on one of my first visits to the city. He told me about the case as we rode along. An old negro woman had worked for one of the best families in the city for a few months only, when the mistress of the house had discovered the theft of a hundred-dollar bill, which she had put in a drawer, intending to put it in the bank the next day. The colored woman had gone home when the theft was discovered. The police went immediately to her house and turned it from top to bottom, but could discover no trace of the bill. They had made several surprise visits, with the same results. Now the old woman was threatening to make it unpleasant for the family which had accused her. My uncle told me he was making one last visit to the old woman to see if he could trip her up in her contention of her innocence, but he admitted that he didn't expect to have any success.

The suspected woman had a cottage on the very edge of town. She was hoeing in a little vegetable patch when he arrived. She threw down her hoe with the belligerent statement that every visit from the de-



tectives was making it that much harder for the family she intended to sue for ruining her character as an honest woman, and went on at a pitiful rate about her chances for any work having been spoiled, because of the suspicion cast on her honesty by this persistent investigation, until I honestly felt terribly sorry for her. My uncle ordered me to wait on the back porch, to my intense disappointment, while he took her inside for a final questioning. His little dog had followed us to the car, begging for a ride, when we started. My uncle usually has him along, anyway, so there were two of us waiting on the porch for him. Dogs adapt themselves very easily to any circumstances, however, and this one was soon nosing around the gate of the chicken pen. I didn't pay much attention, as there was a high wire enclosing it, and I thought the chickens were safe from the mischievous intruder.

Suddenly there was a great squawking and cackling, and to my dismay I discovered that the little rascal had nosed his way between the gate and the post, and there he was scampering around the pen in great glee. The chickens, as soon as he singled one out individually, bent all their effort on flying over the wire, with pretty fair success. I noticed their wings had not been clipped so this was no great feat for them. However, one fat hen seemed to be having a good bit of trouble in keeping out of Scot's reach, and I noticed that she seemed to have a broken wing. Every time she tried to fly over, this wing seemed useless; so she finally gave it up and indulged in helpless squawking, to Scot's great delight. By now the old woman had run out of the house and was adding her angry shrieks to the general uproar.

I was primarily a farmer boy, and a hen with a broken wing was an object which needed attention which I was able to give. I quickly captured the crippled chicken and started to examine her. I didn't notice that the redoubled shrieks (Please turn to page 81)

The Mystery of EDWIN DROOD

(Continued from page 12)



"I HAVE heard from Mr. Crisparkle of your good fortune, Mr. Drood," remarked Neville, as the two turned away from Miss Twinkleton's door.

"What do you mean by my good fortune?" demanded Edwin, sharply.

"I hope there is no offense in my referring to your betrothal?" "Everybody in this chattering old town refers to it," retorted Edwin, "so why not you?" and in a moment the two were in the midst of a quarrel. But suddenly John Jasper stood between them.

"Ned, Ned," he protested, "I don't like this. I have overheard high words between you two. Come—forget it! I have a heater on the fire and glasses on the table. Come along—we'll drink to our friendship!"

So they went to his rooms with him, Neville most reluctantly, and Jasper mixed mulled wine at the fire—a process which seemed to require much compounding. What was there in the wine that should inflame the young men anew? Why was it that Jasper adroitly urged them on until at last, in a fury at an insult from Edwin, Neville sprang to his feet, threw the contents of his glass in Edwin's face, and would have hurled the glass after it, had not Jasper caught his arm.

"Mr. Neville, for shame!" he cried, "Give me that glass. I will have it." He twisted it from Neville's grasp, and the latter staggered out into the night, realizing that he had disgraced himself.



JOHN JASPER made the most of Neville's assault upon Edwin Drood, and confided to everyone that he feared for his nephew's life. But Edwin returned to London the next day, and the two did not meet again. The weeks rolled on without special incident, until Christmas drew near again—the day when Edwin was to go to Cloisterham to claim his bride.

A few days before Christmas, Edwin was summoned to the office of Mr. Hiram Grewgious, an eccentric but shrewd and sound-hearted attorney, who had served for years as Rosa's guardian.

"I sent for you, Edwin," Grewgious explained, "because I have a trust to fulfill, and he opened his safe and took out a small ring-case. 'This ring belonged to Miss Rosa's mother. It was her engagement ring, and it was confided to me with the injunction that when you and Miss Rosa had grown to manhood and womanhood, I should give it to you to place upon her finger, should your betrothal prosper. Your placing it on her finger,' Grewgious went on earnestly, 'will be the solemn seal upon this betrothal. You are going to her—take the ring with you.'"

Somewhat unwillingly Edwin took the little case and placed it carefully in a breast pocket.

"If anything should be amiss," Grewgious added, "if anything should be even slightly wrong between you, I charge you, by the living and the dead, to bring that ring back to me!"

"I shall, sir," Edwin promised, and it was with a very thoughtful face he took his leave.

But neither of them suspected that that little ring was gifted with an invincible force to hold and drag.



THAT same night, John Jasper, equipped with a large bottle of drugged liquor, called upon Durdles to conduct him on that promised expedition through the crypt of the Cathedral. As they started away through the yard of Durdles' marble-cutting establishment, the latter seized Jasper by the arm and drew him back. "Ware that there mound by the yard gate," he said. "It's lime."

"Lime!" echoed Jasper, staring down at the pile with sudden intent interest. "What you call quick-lime?"

"Aye," Durdles answered. "Quick-lime—quick enough to eat your boots—quick enough to eat your bones!"

They went on at last, and in the course of that night, Jasper not only tested the effects of his sleep-inducing drug, but also took a wax imprint of the key to the Sapsea monument, from which he had a key made in London the next day.

(Please turn to page 16)

THREE HUNDRED YEARS *To make a Salad*

*From the four corners of the world Americans have
taken suggestions about salad making*

By
ANN MORTON



Tower Studios

Mexican salads based on old Spanish traditions have a definite place in the American bill of fare.



Tower Studios

Dandelions and other tender greens are transformed into delectable salads by the natives of Italy and southern France.

An all-American salad—tomato stuffed with diced celery and cucumbers garnished with asparagus.



Standard Brands

SALADS aren't what they used to be—thank fortune. Everything from lettuce, endive and romaine to the oil, vinegar and mayonnaise have improved enormously even within the experience of the younger housewives and you, if you have a good memory, can perhaps recall the time when olive oil and mayonnaise dressing were still looked upon with some disdain by a number of old-fashioned Americans whose only notion of salad for supper consisted of garden lettuce—sometimes topped with sliced tomatoes or onions—smothered with vinegar and sugar.

The fact is that an appreciation of salads is something that Americans as a whole have been very slow to acquire. In records of early Colonial and pioneer days, if you find any reference at all to the use of greens in the bill of fare, it is usually tinged with sadness, mentioned only to indicate the inadequate supply of meats, grains, fruits and more substantial vegetables. Here and there you may come across a passage in old books on food and cookery suggesting that the use of "sallet herbs" might be beneficial to the health, and in one hundred-year-old record we are told of salads in which lettuce is combined with such things as cold oysters, salmon or other fish. Crude Gothic mixtures, they are called, which would hardly be found on American tables.

Salad-making progressed very slowly indeed until a generation ago and then—thanks to a wide-spread interest in diet and nutrition and a greater willingness to accept food suggestions from foreign lands—

(Please turn to page 75)

For information concerning this month's food circulars turn to page 99

The Mystery of EDWIN DROOD

(Continued from page 14)



IT was the day before Christmas, and Edwin Drood, the ring in his pocket and with a heart none too light, called for Rosa at Miss Twinkleton's and together they started on their usual walk.

"Let us be courageous, Eddy," said Rosa at last. "We have not been truly happy in our engagement. You know we will be doing right to break it."

And so it was agreed.

"But how shall I ever tell Jack?" Edwin asked, referring to his uncle.

"Does he have to be told?" said Rosa, recoiling a little. "Yes, I suppose he does. Why not leave it to my guardian, Mr. Grewgious? He is coming down in a day or two."

"A good idea!" Edwin agreed. "I don't want to spoil Jack's Christmas eve. He has asked Neville Landless to dine with us—peace and good-will, you know."

They had come among the elm-trees by the cathedral, where they had last sat together, and Rosa raised her face to his, as she had never raised it in the old days.

"God bless you, dear! Good-bye!" she said, and they kissed each other fervently.

And John Jasper, looking on with contorted face from behind a neighboring tree, his heart aflame with jealousy, never suspected that they were bidding each other farewell. And one of his hands stole to the long black scarf he wore about his neck.



THERE was a great storm that night, but the light burned steadily in Jasper's chambers, where he and Edwin Drood and Neville Landless were dining together. Early the next morning, a little group which had gathered in front of Canon Crisparkle's house to inspect the damage done to the Cathedral opposite, was suddenly thrust aside by John Jasper, and heard him loudly inquiring of Crisparkle, at an open window, "Where is my nephew?"

"He is not here," answered the minor Canon. "Is he not with you?"

"No. He went down to the river last night with Mr. Neville, to look at the storm, and has not come back. Call Mr. Neville."

"Neville is not here," Crisparkle explained. "He left early this morning on a walking trip."

"Left this morning! Let me in! Let me in!" and white, half-dressed, panting with terror, the choir-master pushed his way into the house. "My boy has been murdered!" he cried.

EDWIN DROOD had indeed disappeared, and led by Jasper, a party started out in pursuit of Neville, caught up with him not far from town, and brought him back. But there was no real evidence against him, and he was placed in charge of Mr. Crisparkle. Edwin's watch and the stick-pin he used in his tie were discovered caught in the timbers of an old weir along the river, and the river was searched for the body, but without result. Returning home, from this search, muddy and exhausted, Jasper found Hiram Grewgious warning his hands before his fire.

"I have a communication to make to you that will surprise you," said Grewgious, greeting Jasper coldly

and not turning even a step away from the fire. "What is it?" demanded Jasper, his face white and haggard.

"Edwin and Rosa had decided to be affectionate friends, rather than husband and wife," answered Grewgious, his eyes on Jasper's face. "They said good-bye and parted the day before Christmas. . . ."

Jasper, open-mouthed, his face the color of lead, stared at the speaker for an instant, and then, with a shriek of anguish, pitched in a senseless heap to the floor. And Hiram Grewgious, still warming his hands, looked down at him over his shoulder, his face very grim.



ONE afternoon, a servant brought Rosa word that that Mr. Jasper desired to see her. Unable to refuse, but shuddering at the thought of being shut in the same room with him, Rosa directed the servant to say that she would come to Mr. Jasper in the garden, which she knew was commanded by many of the windows of the house. She found him leaning carelessly against the sun-dial.

"I can stay but a moment," she said.

"You will stay longer than that," he countered. "I do not forget how many windows command a view of us, and I will not touch you; but you must listen. I love you madly, madly—I have loved you for years, as you well know."

"Yes, I do know," and she looked at him with horror. "You were false every day and every hour to the nephew you pretended to love so much."

"How beautiful you are!" said Jasper thickly. "You shall be mine. I don't ask for your love; give me yourself and your hatred, or I swear I will hound Neville Landless to his death, and destroy his sister's good name. I know he loves you. . . ."

"Enough!" broke in Rosa, getting up. "You dare to propose to me. . . ."

"Yes!" cried Jasper. "I dare anything! I swear I will make you mine!"

(Please turn to page 18)

COOLING
LOTION



SOOTHING
TALC



REFRESHING
CREAM



EFFECTIVE
DEPILATORY



Tower Studios

Use plenty of creams, lotions and powders when the mercury soars to the top of the thermometer.

Pretty Girls *Look COOL*

PERHAPS an Eskimo belle can go walking with an Eskimo beau at twenty below zero and not be afraid she will acquire a red nose. And we know that the South Sea Island beauty can look charming without benefit of powder or cream when the thermometer is in the hot nineties. But most of us need a lot of help, so far as looks go, in midwinter cold or midsummer heat.

Pretty girls look cool in Summer. Otherwise they aren't pretty. The higher the thermometer goes, the cooler and fresher and daintier they must look—just to counteract the weather. For certainly there is nothing more refreshing to the beholder than a pretty girl all crisp and dainty and unflustered by the heat.

Fortunately for those of us who aren't Eskimos or Tahiti belles there are all sorts of cosmetic aids to cool looks. There are, first, baths—water always on tap, stores of soap to choose from—to clear away dust and perspiration from the skin. And shampoo soaps and liquids to make the hair shining and soft. Then there are creams and lotions to keep skins clear and smooth, to counteract sunburn and to clean away grime. More lotions and creams, and all the paraphernalia of manicuring for the fingers and nails. There are toilet waters and deodorants and depilatories to add to the hot weather cosmetic shelf, with bath salts and dusting

*This is what a girl should
do to look fresh and dainty
in warmer weather*

By PAMELA PINKERTON

powder and water softeners, all designed to help the pretty girl keep cool.

This is a sort of foundation, a background, for the real matter of a cool make-up. Just what shall a girl do to look her freshest and daintiest now that hot weather is really here?

There are two good answers to that question. One says: "Let's protect ourselves as much as we can from the heat and sun, and look as nearly like a graceful white rose as a modern girl can look." The other says: "Let's weather the heat and still be beautiful and fresh—even if we look, perhaps, more like a hollyhock than we do like a white rose."

The girl who chooses the first course keeps her skin as white as she can. She protects it from the sun, uses bleaching creams and lotions, wears shade hats and hides under an umbrella when she goes on the beach. She may use a slightly darker make-up than she would in Winter to give the appearance of a faint coat of tan. Or she may use a lighter powder, because the dampness of perspiration on the face makes her usual powder look darker, and she wants to look fair as well as cool.

The other girl gives her skin a careful coat of tan and uses make-up to go with it. She chooses a powder three or four shades darker than the one she ordinarily uses, matching it to the hue of her skin—and perhaps changing it once or twice in the (Please turn to page 64)

The Mystery of EDWIN DROOD

(Continued from page 16)

YEARS before, Hiram Grewgious had been deeply in love with Rosa Bud's mother. She was buried in the graveyard beside the Cathedral, and he never failed to visit her grave whenever he came to Cloisterham—always late at night, lest he start some unworthy gossip about her.

He had hurried down at his ward's summons, had heard from her lips the story of Jasper's outrageous proposal, and late that night made his customary visit to her mother's grave. As he stood gazing down at it, he was startled by a voice behind him.

"Deary," it said, "I am sick. I must have medicine."

He turned and saw a dirty and disgusting old woman

leering up at him. It was the Princess Puffer.

"What sort of medicine?" Grewgious asked. "Gin?"
"No, deary—opium," answered the hag. "I'll be frank with you. I live in London—I came here to find an old customer of mine and ask him for money, but I can't find him. I don't know his name, but he has black hair and whiskers, and hates someone named Ned."

"How do you know that?" demanded Grewgious, suddenly intent, and the Princess Puffer told him of Jasper's opium ravings. "You shall have your opium," Grewgious assured her, his face shining with satisfaction. "Come with me," and the disease-racked old woman followed him obediently from the churchyard.



HIRAM GREWGIOUS, at last, was ready to spring his trap. So, the next night, he called upon John Jasper.

"I need your help," he said. "Did you find a ring among Edwin Drood's belongings—a ring of diamonds and rubies?"

"No," answered Jasper. "My nephew had no such ring."

"Yes, he did," said Grewgious. "I myself gave it to him a few days before Christmas. He was to place it on Miss Rosa's finger to seal their betrothal. If it was not among his things, he must have had it on him."

"I will make a search for it," muttered Jasper, and showed his visitor out. Then he threw himself into a chair and grasped his head in his hands. "I must go back!" he moaned. "I must search in the lime. It would not destroy the ring. Curses that I did not know of it!"

He waited till midnight sounded; then, making his way through the deserted church-yard to the Sapsea monument, he unlocked its door, lighted a lantern, and entered. But in an instant the lantern crashed to the ground, and, with a shriek of terror, Jasper fled into the night.

For there within the monument stood Edwin Drood.



BUT even as he turned to flee, Jasper was seized by a group of men—Crispake, Grewgious and Neville Landless. He tore himself free, and in wild panic, sprang through the entrance to the Cathedral tower and dashed up the winding stair, his pursuers close behind, Neville Landless in the lead. Up and up they went, round and round, until at last they reached the roof, and as Jasper paused for an instant to look about him, Neville sprang upon him.

"I shall have you, at least!" cried Jasper, his face distorted with fury, and seizing Neville with maniacal strength, he sprang to the low parapet.

"Stop! Stop!" shouted his pursuers, but it was too late.

With a yell of triumph, Jasper reached the parapet and hurled himself over it into the void below, his victim clutched firmly in his arms.

"I CANNOT give you all the details," said Grewgious, later that night, "but the main outlines of the story are clear enough. Jasper, mad with jealousy, determined to kill his nephew. He devised the quarrel with Neville Landless in order that Neville might be suspected. On the night of that fatal dinner, after Neville had departed, he invited Edwin to a last drink, and gave him a glass of drugged wine. As soon as Edwin was unconscious, he threw about his neck a scarf he had been wearing, twisted it tight and held it so until he thought Edwin dead. Then he took the watch from his victim's pocket and the pin from his tie, as they were marks of identity which quicklime would not destroy, and finally, carrying the body to the Sapsea monument, of which he had secured the key, he placed it on the floor, and covered it with quick-

lime, which he had stolen from a pile in Durdle's yard. Perhaps at that moment he was overcome by one of his opium fits—at any rate, he staggered away, forgetting to lock the door of the vault.

"Edwin was not dead. The first bite of the lime on his hand brought him back to consciousness, and he staggered blindly from the tomb, not knowing what had happened—staggered, as it happened, into my arms, for I had been paying a visit to the grave of an old friend. I concealed him until I could unearth convincing evidence against John Jasper. The Princess Puffer gave me the last clue. Then I told Jasper of the ring, knowing that he would be forced to revisit the tomb, and stationed Edwin inside it. The rest you know. That is the story, gentlemen, and John Jasper has paid for his villainy."



Terrible Vengeance

The weirdest story ever written — By GUY ENDORE

The celebrated author of "The Werewolf of Paris" and "The Man from Limbo" presents his first short story written exclusively for MYSTERY MAGAZINE! A breathless drama of two men—one who went mad, another who

destroyed himself with the help of a beautiful gypsy girl! An amazing fantasy of nightmare horrors, by the master of weird fiction! Turn the page and begin the thrilling story of the dead gypsy's wrath and the magic *dri!*

FOR a number of years now Karl Schmidt had been wanting to kill his best friend, Joseph Poldi. At one time, in fact, he had actually bought himself a revolver for that purpose. Then he had pictured to himself the scene that would ensue:

"Well, Poldi," Karl would say, "we've been pretty good friends now for many years. And all the time we've been in business together we've never had a serious difference, have we?"

What would Poldi say to that? Of course he'd begin at once to reminisce in that disgusting sentimental fashion of his, and Karl would get tired of listening and suddenly pull out his gun and crying out: "You liar! You thief!" he would begin to shoot. Bing! Bang! emptying all the chambers of his revolver into Poldi's bulky body.

Well, and after that, what? Why the police would come and they would take Karl away and they would hang him, that being the punishment which the justices of Vienna allot to murderers.

Now wouldn't that be ridiculous? Just picture the papers with their stories: "Karl Schmidt, for many years a trusted employe and minor partner of the Poldi Pump Works, shot down his boss in cold blood, yesterday afternoon." And Karl could imagine all the cooks of Vienna poring over the lurid tabloids in the kitchen while their mistresses devoured it with equal avidity in the living room. Why Karl would simply die of shame long before the hangman slipped a noose around his neck.

Really now was it worth while to have brooded on revenge for nearly twenty years to come to such a trite and unsatisfactory conclusion? Only fools could be satisfied with such a stupid revenge. What Karl wanted was to watch Poldi's face and see his features screwed up with pain and be able to relish every furrow of anguish on Poldi's brow. What he wanted was to witness Poldi's agony day in and day out and enjoy over and over again the knowledge that all this pain that Poldi suffered came from him, from Karl, and that

Poldi never even in the slightest way suspected it.

That was revenge! Yes, that would be real revenge! And never had man a better reason than Karl. Never had there been so skillful a scoundrel as Poldi.

SOME twenty years before Karl and Poldi, both recent graduates from the same technical school, had met in the street. Karl had wanted to slip by. He was an undersized timid sort of fellow. He came from a very poor family, his health had always been fragile, and worse still, he stuttered.

But big jovial Poldi barred his way and bawled out: "Servus!" which is Latin for "your servant!" and the common greeting among students of Vienna. So Karl replied meekly:

"Ah, ser-ser-vus!"

"Well and what are you doing?" Poldi bellowed in his rough, irresistible voice.

Karl did not want to answer that he was looking for a job. That sounded like too cheap a thing to be doing. In his moment of humiliation, just to save himself from the shame of poverty, Karl revealed something that he ought never to have spoken about: "Why I'm about to . . . form . . . ah, to form a company. Yes, to form a company to exploit my invention."

"Say! Why that's fine. What have you invented?"

"A new kind of air pump."

Now it was true that Karl had been working on a new and improved method of pumping out air and creating a rapid vacuum, a device that would be of great value in the growing industry of electric illumination, but that was the last thing he had wanted anybody to know. He had meant to wait until he had worked out every last detail and then have it all patented safely in his name. And now he had blurted it out.

One thing led to another, however, and before long he found himself with Poldi in an expensive cafe where the luxurious surroundings and the prices charged were so disconcerting to poor Karl that he

Day by day, Poldi grew more mad — screaming, crying, praying — as the horror that



lost whatever wits he had and revealed everything.

In a trice, right there in the cafe Poldi had laid the basis for a company to develop and exploit Karl's invention, and Karl, dazzled by Poldi's talk of big sums of money, had agreed to all of Poldi's plans. And so it did not take many days before he was owning a small share in the Poldi Pump Works and his invention was no longer his. In fact it wasn't even patented in his name, but under that of the Poldi Pump Works and Karl Schmidt was merely mentioned as the inventor.

The whole thing had happened so fast that Karl hadn't had time to protest. He let things happen. Then one day Poldi came into Karl's office and casually threw a scientific paper on the desk. "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "They refer to the principle you invented as the new Poldi pump principle. I guess I'll have to write them a letter. After all it's your principle, you know. Ha-ha!"

Karl was still so much under Poldi's influence that he only smiled and looked about to find the mention in the paper: "Oh yes, yes. Well, what do you know about that? Funny isn't it? Heh!"

And Poldi laughed heartily too. "Ha-ha! Those editors! Never know what they are talking about. Well, I'll write them a letter."

For some weeks Karl watched the columns of this scientific paper to see Poldi's letter. But it never appeared. Finally he screwed up his courage to the point where he could say casually: "Say, did you ever send in that letter?"

"What letter?" Poldi asked.

"You know. That letter about the Poldi pump principle."

"Oh. Oh, ohoh! Now I remember." And Poldi burst out laughing. "Can you beat that. Slipped my mind totally. Clean forgot it. Pooh! Well I guess it's too late now."

"Yes I suppose so," Karl agreed meekly.

"Funny how that slipped my mind," Poldi laughed.

"He-he," Karl laughed obediently. At the moment it did seem a little funny. But that night when he lay awake in bed his whole being was flooded with the realization of the fact that he had been completely despoiled, so much so that he, himself, had that very afternoon in his conversation with Poldi, spoken of his own invention as the Poldi principle. Karl could not close his eyes that night. His mind swarmed with fantastic plans to regain his invention. But by dawn he had forced himself to the bitter admission that there was nothing he could do but accept his fate.

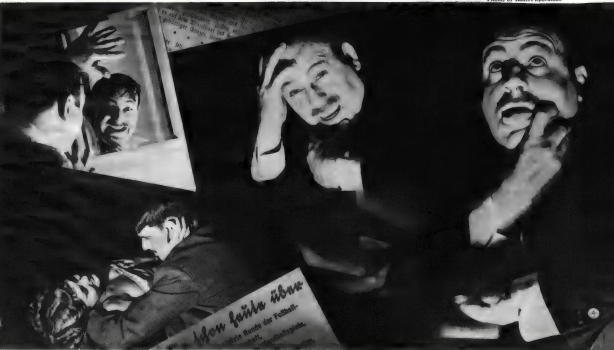
He had indeed thought of confronting Poldi with his crime and demanding restitution. But several circumstances made that impossible. One was the simple fact that in Poldi's presence Karl's courage just oozed out of him. After all Poldi owned the company and the company owned the invention. Why Poldi might, if provoked, fire him. Then where would he be? For the first time in his life Karl was actually earning a fairly decent income. That was too good to jeopardize.

Thus, Karl put off from day to day the moment when he would accuse Poldi of having robbed him. And everyone knows how the habit of putting things off can grow on one. At night, true enough he had the courage again to dream of any number of revenges, and he found such dreams so soothing to his irritated nerves that when morning came he was all prepared to put up with his misfortune again and swallow all the indignities of his real life.

The habit of dreaming instead of acting may explain much of Karl's life. For example he never married. After his mother died he lived alone in a tiny room furnished with but a single cot and a diminutive table. Though Poldi persistently invited him to go out to cafes and elsewhere, Karl just as persistently refused. "You aren't going to save your conscience by taking me out and treating me to a drink with the money that should have been mine," he would say to himself; and after work he would go out for a walk and then go home. And there after removing his shoes he'd lie

gripped him, wore his mind away. Karl, with his gypsy girl, was happy in his revenge.

Photos by Robert Stockman.



down on his cot and smoke innumerable cigarettes and brood all the while over his one great misfortune.

THUS, years passed and things remained as they had been. And thus they might have remained forever if Karl hadn't fallen ill. Mortally ill, so that for a time it seemed that he must die. He had pneumonia and in the most galloping and virulent of forms. Yet throughout the haze of his illness, his mind did not lose sight of its greatest desire. The night nurse heard him moaning time and time again: "I mustn't die! I must not! I must not die!" Until even that hardened creature who had seen so many die, was moved. But later she was puzzled for she heard him add these words: "I've got to kill him before I die. I must see him perish first!"

He did not die. He grew well. Poldi came to his bedside and wept copiously. "So you're going to be well, old man," he said in a husky voice and picked up Karl's thin feeble hand that was limp as wet sea-weed. "Brace up, old boy. And put on some weight now."

From that time on Karl took the greatest precautions for his health. He eschewed meat and cut down on his cigarettes and avoided all strain and exposure. He felt that his life had been spared so that he might carry out his revenge and this without delay.

But now the question was what to do? Was he going to do nothing but dream about various forms of revenge as before and let year after year slip by? Often he remained late in the office, brooding upon this and thinking up such silly ideas as repainting the name on the door. Then he would laugh bitterly to himself, aware of his complete impotence.

And so he did nothing, but left the office late in the evening and wandered slowly along the Ringstrasse and then cut through the Stadt Park. Then when he was tired he would find himself a bench and watch the

children playing diabolio while there was still light to play by.

Occasionally a handsome girl would walk past and turn her head around to look at him. But Karl was not interested in such matters. The girl might even go so far as to sit down beside him. Then finding the fascinating trend of his thoughts disturbed, he had been perhaps just on the point of thrusting a dagger into Poldi, he would get up and seek some more secluded spot where he could thrust the dagger home in peace.

But it happened one day that a gypsy girl passed by. She held in her arms a vast circular loaf of black bread and in addition a tremendous black radish. It was a common enough business this of selling slices of black radish and of black bread in the park. Children often bought just a slice of bread with which to feed the swans or with which to roll pellets tied to a string in order to catch the cygnets.

The gypsy girl passed the bench on which Karl was seated and he looked up at her with such a peculiar glance that she automatically stopped, expecting to sell him a radish sandwich. But Karl said nothing, only continued to stare at her. And yet he did not really see her. He did not notice her voluminous skirts of flowered calico nor her dusky and not unhandsome face. What he saw was a sentence he had read in some book long ago and which had for a while furnished him with many a fine dream revenge: "Gypsies," so the sentence had read, "are said to know how to make a mysterious poison called *dri* which causes death after long agony. Nothing more is known of this poison."

Indeed when Karl had pursued a little toxicological study in order to discover for himself he found too, that nothing more was known of this *dri*, in fact scarcely any of the standard texts as much as mentioned the name.

Noting Karl's stare the gypsy girl was inclined to hope that this man had other interests than mere bread and radish. She was not unwilling to find a more lucrative trade. Her method in such cases was to suggest: "Would the gentleman care to have his fortune told?" She couldn't do it here, she added quickly, because of the "Schutzman" and she nodded her head toward the policeman who was standing nearby.

Mechanically Karl followed the motion of her head. "Yes, yes," he said vaguely. Then he added hastily: "To be sure, I do want my fortune told. Are you good at reading the palm?"

"Very good," said the girl. "My father is King Rom."

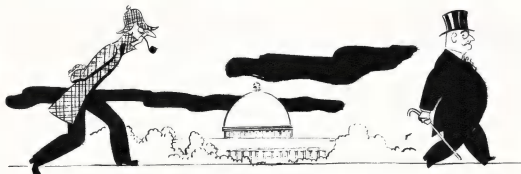
Karl wasn't just quite sure how this made her good at reading palms, but he let it pass.

"My name is Princess Stella," said the girl. "And if you will follow some distance behind me, no one need know we are together." And with that she hoisted her great loaf of bread into a convenient position in the crook of her arm and was off.

Somehow Karl found in himself the courage to follow her. She traversed the Stadt Park, walking lithely, easily, like a panther. She crossed the bridge over the Vienna brook and then led the way into the 10th ward, a quarter of vast (Please turn to page 85)

"We've been keeping too much to ourselves, Karl," said Poldi. "We've got to go out more often hereafter."





OFF *the* RECORD

*A department where every month you may read of the ridiculous and amusing things that happen to America's law-makers.
A rib-tickler hot off the political griddle in Washington*

Madame Secretary's Afternoon Tea

THERE'LL be a grand new building for the Department of Labor soon—if Madame Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins can persuade the powers that be to spend about \$125,000 remodeling a structure which still isn't completed. The vast pile is about half-finished, built to the standard Republican specifications of the late William Nuckles Doak and so lacking the feminine touch. Doak was a Secretary of Labor who needed a brass spittoon at his desk.

So, before he died, he planned himself a magnificent office in the new building, even including a special private elevator for his own personal use. The rest of the building was to be just another building.

When Miss Perkins became Secretary of Labor, she was aghast. The cuspidors went out. She even tried to have the special private elevator removed, but desisted when she learned that it would cost about \$10,000 to brick in the shaft.

The secretary's private office, fitting Doak's ideas of grandeur perfectly, made Miss Perkins shudder. She plans to spend about \$2,000 doing it over to suit her own tastes.

There will be no private shower bath, for one thing, but there will be installation of an additional electric outlet, handy to Miss Perkins' desk, so that she can hook up a stove and a percolator for the serving of afternoon tea.

Biggest fight on the hands of Madame Secretary concerns the floors which Doak figured were good enough for his clerks. The floors were to have been made of a shiny composition, inexpensive but flashy, and slick as a wet beer bar.

"Too dangerous," said Miss Perkins, ordering cork floors.

"Too expensive," said the Bureau of the Budget, tossing the order back at her.

Miss Perkins also wants noise-absorbing walls and an indirect lighting system. Whether any or all of her requests will be granted remains to be seen. While the argument rages, work on the limestone building is practically halted. No telling when it will be completed—unless Miss Perkins gets her own way.

She is one of the capitol's most interesting characters, a vigorous and frequently charming person in tricorne hat and black dress. She's always rushed for time, drinks black coffee for lunch and makes monkeys out of members of Congressional committees almost every time she's called to testify or defend herself.

Madame Secretary (she asked that she be called that) inherited a limousine and chauffeur from the administration of Doak. But the chauffeur was used to Doak.

He couldn't stomach the activity of Miss Perkins. So busy was she figuring out plans for the five-hour day that she frequently worked 17 and 18 hours at a stretch. While she worked, the chauffeur waited.

He stood it as long as he could, then announced that if Miss Perkins considered the five-hour day long enough for other people, it ought to be long enough for her chauffeur.

Miss Perkins disagreed and the chauffeur quit, with some pungent comment about practicing what you preach.

SPECIALI

Have you any questions, serious or otherwise, to ask about your government? John Alexander, MYSTERY MAGAZINE's special correspondent in Washington, will answer the most interesting questions sent in by MYSTERY readers every month. If you want to know how your government works; if you wish information on any subject of national importance; or if you just want to gossip; address your queries to this expert on political happenings—John Alexander, Reporter of Capitol Comics, care of Tower Magazines, 35 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Questions and answers will be printed each month in this magazine.

By

JOHN ALEXANDER

Brickbats and Democrats

SO many fourth class postmasters have been mailing brickbats to themselves that Congress is about to pass a law.

The postmasters, it has developed, wrapped up bricks, flat-irons, rocks and sandbags (Please turn to page 76)

Are YOU responsible

AS the man unharnessed the horses and sent them scurrying into the yard with an affectionate slap on the rump, a woman came out of the house and started down the path to meet him. Her feet seemed to skim over the top of the grass without really touching it, so lightly she ran. In her eyes burned a new and ethereal flame. Then suddenly something thudded against the bulwarks of the man's credulity and he caught sharply at his breath.

She cried to him, "I'm going to have a baby!"

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated the spare, homespun figure.

Awkward arms that were infinitely tender encircled her. "O, Mary, Mary," he said, "O, Mary!"

The woman said nothing; she was too filled with emotion to say anything. She cried a little, as women sometimes do under sudden and great joy, and he stood there like a gaunt, rugged oak in the Indiana soil, and crushed her to him.

There was one child, a girl, but they had wanted another, and now after fifteen years the dream miraculously was coming true.

The woman put her arms around him and drew his head down to her lips. "I hope he is a boy, my darling. I'll name him John, for you. What a beautiful name it will be—John Dillinger!"

Thus came John Dillinger, Public Enemy No. 1, into the world. Thus came the Last of the Gunmen!

SOMEWHERE along the line between here and the inevitable villain's grave, John Dillinger personally will answer for his crime. But who will answer for John Dillinger? That is what society would like to know.

Let us look this renegade in the face for a

moment—and see if we can unriddle him.

His eyes are slate yellow, large and clear now, but if he had a gun in his hand they would turn a dirvish green and narrow to slits. Between them is a slight brown mole.

His forehead is high and strong, which is supposed to denote intelligence, but this is a contradiction in John Dillinger. He is dumb. After spending nine years behind bars for robbery, a new life was suddenly opened to him. He was paroled, set free, to begin anew. Within three days he broke that parole and robbed a

Here is the picture of Dillinger:

Fifteen men have died sudden and violent deaths.

Banks have been robbed.

He is a liar and a thief.

A failure in school—he deserted.

In accepting salvation, he robbed with one hand while shaking hands with the minister with the other.

From the cradle he has been anti-social.

He has shamed the name of his father.

He has been false to every trust—marriage, church, home.

Not one redeeming feature is there to his credit.

What are you going to do about it?



for DILLINGER?

A challenge to the parents of America! Is Dillinger the result of our social system? Have our homes, schools and churches failed? The answer to America's prize hoodlum lies with the mothers and fathers of the next generation! Can they prevent future Dillingers?

By JOHN ROY HARRISON

bank. Only the crassly stupid deliberately choose crime when respectability is within reach.

At thirty-one he stands five feet seven-and-one-eighth inches high, is neither dark nor fair, and is crowned with chestnut hair. The mouth is straight and stern. What pleasantness the lips ever held lies curdled in a sneer. He weighs 153 pounds.

There you have the physical John Dillinger, the man who pulls a trigger with one hand and tips his hat to the ladies with the other. Now let us see whether heredity had a hand in fashioning the son who proved false to every trust imposed in him.

The records prove that John Dillinger, Sr., is a respectable, law-abiding citizen. He is a Bible reader and a church-goer. A man who pays his debts, works hard, and is the very antithesis of the son he begot.

For generations the Dillinger men have been farmers.

Even in the old country they were tillers of the soil. They were a frugal, thrifty clan who worked hard, respected their neighbors, and feared the Lord. They were men who remained close to nature, because the soil, in a way, was symbolic of all that was good and clean and strong. From it they drew food and clothing, and so, being men of the soil, they loved and nurtured it as best they knew how.

At sixty-nine the elder Dillinger still adheres to the good earth. He lives on a pleasant little farm not far from Mooresville, Indiana. In the morning he goes over the growing fields of grain. In the late evenings he sits in the shadows and milks his cows. He has four cows, and in return for the rich grass and the grain he gives them they yield butter and milk and cream.

For thirty years he has been a constant churchman and a pillar in the community. He saved his money and at one time had nearly \$10,000 in the bank.

His labors for his minister and his church are a testimony to his sense of fidelity, for when, in 1908, his first wife died, she called him and the infant John to her.

"I want you to promise me to live within the church," she implored.

CONDRADO MASSAGUER,
famous Cuban publisher, artist and master of satire,
gives his conception of the American parade
marching under the shadow of the last gunman!



DILLINGER—Gangster! Murder! Hoodlum! Deserter!
America has come to regard these names as synonymous. A disgrace even to the underworld, this mobster has blazed a trail of violent death and shame across the Middle West!

John the infant clapped his baby hands and gurgled. John the elder whispered through his grief, "I promise, Mary."

NO, it wasn't the father. No blemish ever touched the name of Dillinger until John, the killer, crucified his father, betrayed his God and the mother who bore him.

What about his mother? Was there bad blood in Mary Lancaster's line which lay dormant all these years until finally it manifested itself in Kill-Crazy John?

There is nothing to substantiate such a belief. There is no flaw in the Lancaster make-up. No known heritage from the past has been found that enables John Dillinger to point an accusing finger and say, "What chance did I have when my own mother gave me bad blood?"

Like the Dillingers, the Lancasters were humble stock. They too were tillers of the soil. From it they drew sustenance and they remained close to it.

Killer Dillinger's one contribution to the soil of his father and his mother was to spill blood on it.

If not heredity, what about environment? Somewhere the answer to the Dillinger riddle lies buried. Something gave impetus to the career that has left fifteen dead in its wake. Dillinger's parents were lovers of the truth. Killer Dillinger is a liar and a thief, and has been since he was able to walk. Maybe his homelife had something to do with it. Maybe his early companions led him astray. Perhaps the school, even the church was at fault. Let us see.

When Dillinger's mother died, in 1908, and she virtually died of the effects of childbirth, the elder Dillinger set about the task of raising his boy. In those days John, Jr., was a young man and just making his way. That was before a surplus showed itself in his bank account; nevertheless, there was plenty for all the necessities. *The (Please turn to page 59)*



LITTLE BOOK OF STRANGE CRIMES

MURDER AT THE BAR

AFTER a hard day in the ice business, Frank La Prano joined two friends at a table in a Newark beer saloon. They were looking for relaxation. Little they guessed that they would need it more at the end of the evening than at the beginning.

For when midnight came and a lot of suds had been washed up, the drowsy peace of the establishment was shattered by shouts, curses, brandished fists, blows. Four men, strangers to La Prano and his friends, were brawling at the bar. One of them, without warning, whipped out a revolver and fired twice at another, who staggered, clutched at his chest, where an ominous red stain was spreading, moaned, and pitched over.

A woman screamed and fainted. "He's shot!" someone shouted; and another, "You've killed him!" In the uproar and confusion the man with the revolver fled, unpursued. "I'd better call the police," said the bartender, and walked out, for there was no phone in the place. In a little while a stranger entered. "I'm an undertaker," he explained, as he bent over the limp and bloody body.

La Prano and his friends had retreated—badly scared, uncertain what to do—into a far corner. Two men came over to them. "Listen," one of them said, "it's a tough break for you fellows to get mixed up in this, but if the cops find you here they're likely to hold you as material witnesses." The trio turned frightened faces to one another. "But I want to give you a break. For \$500 apiece I can fix things for you to get out now, and for \$5,000 more I can see that no one knows you were here. But make it snappy."

La Prano had been collecting that day and had a large sum of money with him. He turned it out, and the others emptied their pockets. They handed it all over, and slipped away through a side door, gratefully promising to pay \$5,000 on Saturday.

La Prano was on hand at the appointed time and place to buy himself and his friends out of appearing as witnesses to a murder. He deposited a thick roll in a designated spot

Truth is stranger than fiction! And this new diary of odd occurrences will acquaint you each month with the most peculiar events of the day! A monthly record of strange things that happen to strange people!

and withdrew. The blackmailer appeared and seized the money. But he had barely time to discover that he held only a roll of brown paper wrapped in a ten dollar bill before policemen stepped out of hiding and arrested him for taking part in a gruesome swindle.

There had been no murder in the saloon—only a fake for the purpose of bilking La Prano and his friends, likely-seeming victims. The brawl was staged. The "murdered" man was "shot" with blanks. The "blood" he shed was red ink from a squirt gun. These very implements were found later, police said, when three more accomplices were rounded up. They were all charged with extortion, and their case is pending.

How did it come to light? The day after the "murder" La Prano saw the "dead" man walking along the street, went to the police, and was by them advised to pretend to go through with the shakedown, while they hid nearby to catch the swindler in the act of collecting.

CONVICTS in Joliet who have canaries must cover their cages by nine o'clock at night so that their singing won't disturb the others.

HOW GOOD IS YOUR MEMORY?

(1) What is Boozie Bourse? (2) How many armed thugs are there in the American underworld? (3) What well-known gun-moll smoked cigars? (4) What is the French executioner paid per guillotining? (5) Who were Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith? (6) How long did Jesse James, the famous outlaw, stay in prison? (7) What is a rat stand? (8) What murder case led to diplomatic difficulties between the United States and Italy? (9) Who were Albert O. Jones and E. J. Lord? (10) What is a roach? (Answers at end of department.)

THIS just goes to show how hard times are in Chicago. Three robbers, looting a warehouse, were surprised by two strangers who wanted to know what they were doing. "Whaddaya think we're doing?" one replied. "We're sticking up the joint." So the three who were first on the scene, and the newcomers, there for the same purpose, decided it was better to cooperate than to fight. They teamed up and got away with \$1,500.

HOW TO GET RID OF A GHOST

THERE was sobbing about the suicide's grave in Damian, Roumania. And as the mourners turned to go, there was an unspoken question in every mind. "Can she sleep quietly in her grave when she has died by her own hand?" Apart from the rest, slowly, blinded with tears, went Stephen Safta, husband of the self-slain woman, going back to his lonely home, the empty years ahead.

In the night came driving rain that pounded on Safta's cottage roof, while low thunder growled in the distance.

He awakened. The room was faintly luminous with a strange blue light that came from nowhere. He looked about anxiously, and was frozen with terror when in a corner he thought he saw the figure of his dead wife. He sat stiffly, the covers clutched about him, staring speechlessly, as she advanced slowly to the foot of the bed. (Please turn to page 98)



MURDERS

Ferrin Fraser again presents Professor Baker, of Riverside University, who hated violence, but couldn't help getting mixed up in murders of all kinds—and solving them. And when a fatal accident, an impossible suicide, and a mysterious death followed each other in quick succession, he had his own unique way of trapping the killer, which had little to do with the Fine Arts

PROFESSOR GEORGE BAKER walked briskly along 116th Street and the University campus. It was a lovely May evening, and he was thinking that in one short month the term would be over and he would be free. Every Spring he began longing for the fine galleries of Rome and Naples, and began hating his imagination-less Fine Arts students who didn't know a Gothic arch from a Cellini cup.

For a few moments he slackened his pace to drink in the curved beauty of the granite sun-dial in the starlight. Then he smiled to himself and remembered that he had started out to call on his old friend, Dr. Thorndyke. Professor Baker was calling because he really liked Thorndyke, and also because for the past two weeks he had had a slight pain around his heart. Being an underpaid faculty member, there was no harm in getting free medical advice at the same time he paid a social call.

Professor Baker moved up the narrow walk, mounted the brownstone steps, and jerked the ancient, enameled bell-pull by the side of a wide, white door. He smiled at the neat brass signs just above the bell—"C. J. Thorndyke, M.D."—and—"Emanuel Cortez, M.D." They seemed business-like, incongruous, and out of place on this tree-surrounded old house on Morningside Heights that had once heard the Truesdale horses of the doctor's wife prancing under its *porte-cochere* to the stables. There was no answer to the bell, and the Professor waited. There was always someone home at the Thorndyke's—if no one else, Drake, the butler. A bit impatient, the Professor pulled the bell again.

A moment later he heard steps on the hall stairs, and the wide door swung open. Drake looked red and flustered, slightly out-of-breath, and Baker noticed that his hand shook on the door knob.

"Come in, sir," the butler said. "I don't know whether the doctor will see you. There's been an—accident."

"An accident? I'm sorry, Drake. What was it?"

"Miss Alice," Drake said, "she—she's dead, sir."

"Dead!"

THE Professor was irritated that the word had slipped out. He hated exclamations, and he hated them particularly when they came from himself. But after all, he had seen Alice Thorndyke on the campus just two days before. As a matter-of-fact the girl, red-cheeked and smiling, had stopped him for congratulations. "I'm going to be married, Professor!" she had cried, "Brad Westover. You had him in your class two years ago." Standing on the Thorndyke steps now Baker very clearly remembered his joking reply "I hope he makes a better husband than he did a Fine Arts student, Alice!"

He looked at Drake, trying to maintain a professional calmness.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"It was a picture, sir. The picture of her mother. I—perhaps you'd better step in. The doctor might like to

The younger Thorndykes:
Arthur, Alice, James, Sonia.

that couldn't HAPPEN

By FERRIN FRASER

see you. He seems to be very much upset."

Drake held the door wider, and the Professor stepped into the dim hall, mechanically removing his hat.

"It just happened, sir—not five minutes ago. They're all upstairs in her room. If you'd like to step up—"

Without waiting for an answer Drake began mounting the carpeted stairs. Baker followed. The upper hall was brightly lighted and the door on the left stood open.

From the head of the stairs he could see into the room. His friend, Doctor Thorndyke, was bending over a white bed. Other members of the family stood about, and he heard a girl's sobs from somewhere in the shadows. That would be Sonia, of course. He caught a glimpse of the oldest son, John's round face, staring mutely down at the bed.

But what really startled the Professor was the face on the floor. He recognized it immediately as that of Sarah Truesdale Thorndyke, and he saw that it was the atrocious portrait which had once hung in the lower hall. Its heavy gilt frame caught and reflected the light. Even to the Professor the floor seemed a queer place for Mrs. Thorndyke's picture.

He touched Drake's arm at the doorway. "I won't go in," he murmured. "Just ask the doctor if there is anything I can do."

For a moment Professor Baker hovered uncertainly about the doorway. He really hadn't intended to come upstairs at all. Drake had really rushed him into it, and he felt a little resentful. But he also felt very sorry for his old friend, and he took Thorndyke's big hand in both his little ones when the doctor came out.

"I'm so sorry, Carl. If there's anything I can do—"

Doctor Thorndyke looked down at him with dark, serious eyes and shook his gray head.

"I'm afraid there's nothing anyone can do, George. She's dead."

The Professor shivered slightly. It was difficult to associate the word "dead" with the red-cheeked and happy girl he had seen but two days before.

"How did it happen?" he asked. "Was she ill—?"

Again Thorndyke shook his head.

"It was that picture," he said, looking down. "That picture of her mother."

Professor Baker felt a little foolish as he murmured. "I know it's a very bad painting, Carl, but I don't see how—"

"It fell," Thorndyke said in a low voice. "It was hanging over the head of her bed. That two hundred pound frame crushed her skull."

Professor Baker made a sympathetic noise in his throat.

"But the last time I saw it," he said "it was hanging in the hall downstairs."

"I know. But last week Alice had it moved to her room."

The Professor stood a moment and looked down at the sweet, faded face of Sarah

Truesdale staring up at him from the canvas.

"There's a striking resemblance," he said gently, "between mother and daughter. I remember, Carl, when Sarah was just Alice's age. I remember the day you were married, in fact. She was very happy, wasn't she?"

Thorndyke nodded. For the first time the Professor saw tears in his friend's eyes.

"Very. Marriage was a lovely thing to Sarah. She wanted all her children to be married—and then she died before seeing even one of them at the altar."

"It is very sad," said Baker gently, "very sad. If there is anything I can do, Carl—"

"I'll let you know, George. Thank you."

The Professor turned and went slowly down the dim stairs. At the bottom he looked up at the unfaded place on the wall where Sarah Truesdale Thorndyke's portrait had once hung. He shook his head thought-

TOBY STUBBS



"I'm all upset, Professor," the boy stammered. "This thing, it couldn't have happened!"

fully and started for the door. Footsteps sounded on the stairs behind him and he paused a moment. It was James, Thorndyke's youngest son.

"Professor Baker," the boy called.

"Yes, James?"

"I saw you upstairs and I—I wanted to speak to you a minute."

The boy fumbled in his left-hand pocket for a cigarette and lighted it nervously.

"I'm all upset. This thing is—well, it couldn't have happened!"

Professor Baker put a sympathetic hand on the boy's arm.

"It did happen, James."

"I know—but it *couldn't* have! You see, I hung that picture myself—last week. Alice was very fond of it. She wanted it over her bed. I put it up solidly. It couldn't have fallen!"

Professor Baker touched the boy's shoulder.

"You mustn't blame yourself, James. Accidents have a way of happening."

"But," James said steadily, "*I don't believe it was an accident!*"

PROFESSOR BAKER went home, vaguely worried. He realized that James Thorndyke was young and had been greatly shocked by his sister's death; but the boy's words—"I don't believe it was an accident!" bothered him. Still, pictures did fall from time to time—the walls of old houses trembled under traffic, and old plaster became dry and crumbly. Undoubtedly James blamed himself for a faulty hanging of the picture and was attempting to make excuses.

The Professor couldn't forget it, however, and during the next week his lectures on Da Vinci suffered.

One evening he said to Mary, his wife, "A picture could fall from a wall if the plaster about its fastenings was loosened, couldn't it?"

Mary looked up humoringly. "Of course, George."

"And if a bed were flat against that wall, and a young girl bounced into it—as I suppose young girls do—the shock of the head of the bed against the wall would be very likely to dislodge that picture—wouldn't you say?"

"Yes, George."

The Professor sighed helplessly.

"Sometimes, Mary," he said, "this seems to be a very strange world."

He turned back to his "History of the Fine Arts" as the telephone rang. Mary came back into the room a trifle breathless.

"That was Drake, George," she said. "He asked if you would go over to Thorndyke's house at once."

"Why, Mary?"

The Professor saw his wife tremble slightly.

"James has committed suicide!" she said.

A FEW minutes later Professor Baker moved quickly up the short walk to the Thorndyke's wide, white door. There was a police car before the house this time and Baker shuddered. His previous experience with the police had been extremely boring, and he had no wish again to encounter the unintellectuals of the law. He knew, however, that the coroner and police must be called in cases of suicide, and he was stoically prepared to bear their burden if he could help his friend Thorndyke.

The door was opened almost immediately by Drake. The butler's face was drawn and pale, but he still maintained his dignity.

"Come in, sir. The doctor asked me to call you—"

"Yes, Drake. Where is he?"

"Upstairs, sir. Go right up. There are some policemen there."

The Professor winced. But he straightened his narrow little shoulders and mounted the stairs. There was brilliant light in James' room at the end of the hall and he hesitated in the doorway. It was a large room, a window on each of two sides. The college pennants on the wall, the framed photographs of crews and football teams, proclaimed it a boy's room. Lying on the

bed, fully clothed, was the body of James Thorndyke. Even from the door Professor Baker could see the ugly black hole in the right side of the boy's head just below the temple.

There were a number of people in the room and the Professor hesitatingly singled out the tall figure of Dr. Thorndyke and said, "Carl?"

Everyone turned and stared at him. He recognized two faces that he knew. One was Police Surgeon Swan, and the other Detective-Sergeant McCarthy. He had met them both during a little matter of a man found hanging from a building across the street from his house.

"Well if it ain't Baker!" McCarthy boomed. "Glad to see you, Professor! How are you?"

"I am very well, thank you," the Professor said politely.

He felt that somehow it was wrong that he should know this coarse policeman in Thorndyke's presence. It was time for sorrow, not for bellowed greetings. He turned to Thorndyke and took the doctor's hand.

"I'm so sorry, Carl. Why did he do it?"

Thorndyke looked sadly toward the bed. His face had aged since the Professor had seen it a week before. It was intensely pale, with deep lines running down from each corner of the wide mouth.

"Poor James! He hadn't been the same since Alice died. He kept saying that it wasn't his fault—that he had hung the picture solidly. He brooded about it—"

"Death must have come very suddenly," the Professor murmured. "She was smoking when it happened."



he spent hours in her empty room—he became horribly despondent. And tonight—he did this."

Thorndyke motioned toward the bed and the Professor followed the doctor's hand with his eyes.

"Yeah—it's suicide all right," he heard McCarthy say. "Not a doubt. He was sitting here in this chair by the table—"

"Then he was not on the bed?" the Professor asked mildly.

"Nah. We moved him there later. He was in this chair slumped down across the table with the gun in his right hand. Here it is—.32 calibre—one shot fired. Both windows are locked. If anybody came in they had to do it by that door. And if they'd done that with a gun, this guy would have had plenty of time to get out of that chair. The powder marks show the shot was fired within two inches of his head—"

"But," Professor Baker said apologetically, "James wouldn't have risen if he knew the person."

"Huh?"

"What I mean is, if someone whom James knew very well—his father, say, or his brother or sister, or Dr. Cortez, or one of the servants—came in, it is very likely he would have remained seated."

Immediately the Professor was sorry he had spoken. In trying to be completely logical he had forgotten how harsh the suggestion in his words would be to his friend Dr. Thorndyke. He turned impulsively.

"I'm sorry, Carl. I—"

But Sergeant McCarthy had pounced on the idea.

"Say! There might be something in that! Anybody who knew this kid could have walked in here, stood behind him while he was looking at this book on the table, and popped him off without his ever knowing

it! Who owns this gun, anyway? Do you know?"

"I do," Dr. Thorndyke said.

MCCARTHY took a step forward.

"Oh, you do, eh? Where was it?"

"In a drawer of my office desk downstairs."

"Could anyone in the house have got it?"

"Yes. The drawer is never locked."

Sergeant McCarthy thrust his thumbs in his vest. He seemed very pleased with himself as he turned to the Police Surgeon.

"There may be something in this, Swan!" He swung back on the doctor, almost belligerently. "Who heard the shot fired?" he snapped.

"I think Dr. Cortez and my son, John, were the only ones," Thorndyke answered. "John's room is just across the hall, and Dr. Cortez was in the library on this floor with the door open."

"Anybody else in the house?"

"Of course. Arthur and Sonia, my other children, were in bed—asleep. The servants, except Drake, had gone to their rooms on the third floor."

"And where were you, Doc?"

Professor Baker wondered at his friend's sudden nervousness. There seemed no reason for it, as the Sergeant's question was natural enough.

"I was downstairs in my office," Thorndyke said.

"You didn't hear the shot?"

"No—the walls of this old house are very thick."

"Yeah," said McCarthy. "I see they are. Well, let's have in these guys that heard it. I got some questions to ask."

While they waited, Professor Baker looked thoughtfully toward the bed. In his placid life he had seen

very little death, and when it came—especially to young people—it always shocked him. He had taught James in one of his classes, and the boy looked now very much as he always had. His blue and white tie was fastened in its same backward knot—the sleeves of his crumpled coat were worn shiny in the same way. Apparently the mystery of death made only interior changes.

Dr. Cortez and John Thorndyke came. The Professor had never cared for Cortez. He had often wondered why Thorndyke had gone into partnership with him. "Doctoring," Thorndyke had said once, smiling, "requires a bedside manner which I haven't got. I always send Cortez to call on the ladies." The Professor judged that Cortez would be very efficient in calling on the ladies.

And Baker had always been rather indifferent to John, too. He was the oldest of the Thorndyke children, sober, steady, serious, deep in his real-estate business, and with no more sense of beauty than one of the Manhattan rocks the Thorndyke house was built on.

"Well, Cortez," McCarthy said, "the doc here tells me you heard the shot fired tonight."

"Yes," Cortez said, "I was in the library at the end of the hall. I wasn't certain, at first, it was a shot. It might have been a slammed door or the back-firing of a car. I listened for a couple of minutes, then rose and stepped in to the hall."

"Was anyone in the hall?" McCarthy asked.

Cortez paused a split second before (Please turn to page 66)



The Woman in Scarlet Stockings



Old Matilda was a little crazy. She used to go running to the old house, trying to be on time.

BUNNY BROOKS brought Dr. Greerson and Dr. Greerson's son Kenneth back from the lower barns. Bunny's young wife, Eleanor, a pale and rather pretty girl with gray eyes, her small mouth brightly rouged, was sitting in a canvas chair before the front door of the old house. She and Bunny had lived there a month. Dr. Greerson and his son, also city people, or ex-city people, were their first visitors.

"I have always admired the place," Dr. Greerson said.

Kenneth looked into the wistful eyes of young Mrs. Bunny Brooks. "I think it might be a bit lonely," he said.

It was Bunny's discovery, this old farmhouse with a stone chimney, small window panes and clapboards blacked with weather. It had been unoccupied for years, standing blind and empty on its round hill. The horizon was green woods. The only cleared meadow that remained, sloped down to the glinting pond and the crooked barns; and it would soon join the new wilderness for sumac, young birch, hickory, flourished, and the stone walls were lost under grape, poison ivy, elderberry.

"Yes, sir," Bunny said as they all sat down, "you're our first visitors, except the old woman yesterday. And Eleanor thinks I didn't really see her."

"I haven't said so."

By NORMAN MATSON

Illustrated by
L. R. GUSTAVSON



An old house, a young wife, an indifferent husband, and the weird ghost-woman make this story a dramatic masterpiece of chills and creeps you will never forget! A perfect haunted-house mystery—that might actually have happened!

"No, but that's what you think. I can tell." Bunny was a dapper little man with gray hair, parted neatly in the middle, a man who had always lived in the city, who belonged there. He lifted his glasses. Red marks were on his short nose. He rubbed these, frowning.

"Eleanor was in the kitchen," he explained, "and when she heard me speaking to this old woman she sang out: 'Bunny, are you talking to yourself?' She was frightened. Weren't you, dear?"

"We had been alone here for so long. I've never been so alone in all my life. Yes, I was a little frightened. I came out into the front hall, and . . ."

"Oh, let me tell it," Bunny said. "It was this way, Doctor: I had gone upstairs to get a coil of wire I remember having seen in the east bedroom. The door wouldn't open at first. The latch must have fallen. I had to shove hard to get in. I picked up the wire—it was rusty and quite useless I found out later, something left in the house—and started down again. Someone had closed the door at the bottom of the stairway."

"I didn't," Eleanor said. She had evidently said this before. Bunny turned on her: "Oh, very well! It was the cook we haven't got. It was a ghost. What the

hell difference does it make what it was?"

"Oh, come," Dr. Greerson said reasonably. "It was the wind."

Kenneth smiled at Eleanor.

He liked her. He thought she was beautiful, too young for Bunny, and he was sorry for her. She smiled back, looked away.

"Anyway," Bunny went on, "it was damned dark on that stairway. I had to grope for the catch on the door, and I came out blinking against the bright square of light from the window in the front door. When I could see clearly I found myself looking straight into her eyes—the old woman's eyes."

Eleanor shivered. "I do wish you'd not be so serious about this," she said.

"I'm not. I'm just telling it. I know I saw her."

"It was an old woman in a bonnet," Bunny went on. "A black crepe bonnet, the kind you never see any more. Her face was close to the pane; her mouth slightly open. Several of her teeth were gone, and the ones she had were long and gray-colored. She was screwing up her eyes to see in, shading them with one hand. She was very thin, and her skin was yellow; she looked like she was dead. Her eyes were fixed on the air in front of my face, understand, and then they focussed and steadied. We stared at each other through the glass. I was, h'm, terrified. The road here goes no place, as you know, doctor; we're a mile off the highway and this road really ends right here; and nobody ever comes. I wasn't expecting any caller, so that made it worse. But I managed to open the door. I said: 'How do you do?'"

Eleanor interrupted again: "Your voice was so strange." Kenneth watched Bunny's face skeptically. He asked: "So then what did the old woman say?"

"She said: 'I don't know who you are,' whispering. I didn't say anything. She said: 'I been to the Partelos'. If you see my sister say I came back. I didn't go to church!'"

"I didn't say anything. How could I? She nodded



A stair creaked, quite plainly. After a time, another creak. She heard someone breathing, just outside her door.

her bonnet at me. 'I'll be back,' she whispered; and that was all. She went away. I watched her go along the road. She had scarlet stockings on and black shoes."

Eleanor added: "I ran out the back door to see if I could catch her beyond the corn crib but the air was empty. She wasn't anywhere."

"She took the foot path into the woods," Dr. Greerson said. He repeated this as if he thought it important.

"Scarlet stockings," Kenneth said softly as if to himself.

Bunny turned his way. "Yes, I saw them. I saw her. I talked to her."

"Man, man, we believe you," Dr. Greerson assured him.

"But you don't! Kenneth doesn't. Eleanor doesn't. Hell, I've got feelings! Doctor, you tell me, you're supposed to know something about the mind, you tell me why I should imagine that old woman."

"You didn't. You saw her, actually, in the flesh. Why not?"

"But the Partelo place she said she was stopping at. That's nothing but a cellar hole now, lost in the woods down there. And the church—she pointed down there, toward the woods; there was a church there—once. It burned down long ago."

The doctor touched his forehead. "There are queer

old folk around here," he said, "plenty of them. You said you were going to show me the old mill dam where you plan the swimming pool. Shall we go? The afternoon's already gone."

"Yes, yes, of course." Bunny got up, looked at Kenneth.

The young man shook his dark head. "I've seen your dam."

Bunny and the doctor started down through the timothy grass toward the pond. They were soon out of sight. A bob-white called, sudden as a pistol shot, and that seemed to mark the end of the day, though it was still broad daylight. A chill breath ran across the yard.

"WHO was the old woman?" Eleanor asked. "You've lived around here for a long time. Tell me."

"Nobody."

"You think . . . Bunny only imagined it?"

"He must have. Father often treats cases like that. Bunny was tired out—he said so himself—from outdoor work, not being used to it. When you're tired . . . you sometimes see things."

She shivered.

"People walk about upstairs in these old houses, creak-creak, back and forth. Know why? Because of the wide floor—boards expand and contract with temperature changes. That's all. Bertha Bliven's no more than a thermal creak."

"Bertha Bliven?"

"She opens doors. She's up in the east bedroom; you heard about her, surely, when you bought the house."

"Nope. She's—she's a ghost, is that it?"

"It's just one of those stories; I'd not have mentioned her, if I'd known you hadn't heard. She hung herself one Sunday; sent her kid sister Matilda, who was living with her, off to church but Matilda went only half-way. She was worried the way Bertha acted; so when she reached the Partelo farm down there she stopped and turned back; and

when she was back to the barns and could see this house again it seemed all changed. The only thing really was that the shutters upstairs and down were tight closed; queer, though in the middle of Sunday. She crept in and called Bertha and nobody answered. Finally she went upstairs and then she heard a pounding on the walls of the bedroom. It shook the house. She ran downstairs and hid in a closet. Of course the pounding was Bertha's feet against that board partition, she hanging by her neck and dying; but the kid didn't know. If she had she could have saved her sister. She hid; and when Bertha's husband came home he took her back upstairs and they opened the door together. Then it was too late. Bertha had a white dress on. She'd used wire. That's all there is to it. Everybody knows the story."

Eleanor said: "Poor kid. Poor little kid. What happened to her?"

"I don't know. She moved away. She died. This was thirty years ago, you know."

DRIVING home, on the highway, Dr. Greerson pointed out an old woman they glimpsed in the glare of their headlights. She had a bonnet on.

"There," Dr. Greerson said, "is Bunny's old woman. Old Matilda. She's crazy, a little crazy. Her sister Bertha Bliven, you remember, was the one hanged herself in Bunny's house. (Please turn to page 100)

GIFTS

YOU CAN MAKE

Thirty cents pays for the materials needed for any of these up-to-date accessories

By FRANCES COWLES

With a pair of mittens made of waterproof chintz you will be able to keep your hands dry when making malted milk shakes or other cold beverages.



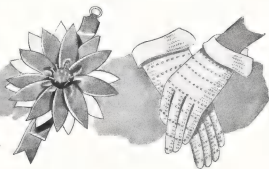
Thirty cents is all you need to make a plump little cushion covered with flowered chintz, large checks or plaid, for the living-room, bedroom or veranda.



Here's a bag made of pasteboard and figured chintz that anyone would like to have to hold needles, threads, and other sewing materials as well as cosmetics.



You can make this jaunty little apron of dainty dimity or dotted swiss, and finish it with bright seam binding, and give it to a friend, or use it for a card party prize. The original, made of pink and white figured print bound with pink, was specially designed for Gracie Allen of film and radio fame.



This oilcloth pin-cushion can be made for less than thirty cents but it is attractive enough for a most exacting friend.

Crocheted gloves are very smart and new, and well-dressed women will wear them throughout the Summer and early Autumn.

For information concerning this month's circulars please turn to page 84

THE SINISTER



Tower Studios

Ellery observed that Miss Krutch was a distinctly attractive young woman. "Tell Mr. Queen what you told me," Detective Murch ordered.

MR. PHINEAS MASON, attorney-at-law, had a chunky nose and wrinkle-bedded eyes. He sat glaring at his discreet chauffeur.

"And now," he said in an angry voice, "there's actually been murder done. I can't imagine what the world is coming to, Mr. Queen."

Mr. Ellery Queen drawled: "The world's all right; the trouble is the people in it. Suppose you tell me what you can about these curious Shaws. After all, you

know, I shan't be too heartily received by your Long Island constabulary; and since I foresee difficulties, I should like to be forearmed as well."

Mason frowned. "It was my partner, Coolidge," he began in a pained voice, "who originally handled Shaw's affairs. John A. Shaw, the millionaire. Before your time, I daresay. Shaw's first wife died in childbirth in 1895. The child—Agatha, she's a divorcee now, with a son of eight—of course, survived her mother; and

BEARD

By
ELLERY QUEEN

Mr. Phineas Mason didn't know what the world was coming to, but Ellery Queen did, and proceeded to solve a very mysterious murder in a very weird house, where queer people, a beautiful nurse and a fight for life marked the high spots of this new, exciting adventure with the scholarly sleuth

there was one previous child, named after his father. Son John's forty-five now. . . . Old John Shaw remarried soon after his first wife's death, and then shortly after his second marriage died himself. The second wife, Maria Paine Shaw, survived her husband by a little more than thirty years. She died only a month ago.

"A lot of mortalities," murmured Ellery, lighting a cigarette. "So far, Mr. Mason, a prosaic tale. And what has the Shaw history to do—"

"Patience," sighed Mason. "Now old John Shaw bequeathed his entire fortune to his second wife, Maria. The two children, John and Agatha, got nothing, not even trust; I suppose old Shaw trusted Maria to take care of them."

"I scent the usual story," yawned Ellery. "She didn't. No go between stepmother and acquired progeny?"

The lawyer wiped his brow. "It was horrible. They fought for thirty years like—like savages. I will say, in extenuation of Mrs. Shaw's conduct, that she had provocation. John's always been a shiftless, unreliable beggar, disrespectful, profligate, quite vicious. Nevertheless, she's treated him well in money matters. As I said, he's forty-five now; and he hasn't done a lick of work in his life. He's a drunkard, too."

"Sounds charming. And Sister Agatha, the divorcee?"

"A feminine edition of her brother. She married a fortune-hunter as worthless as herself; when he found out she was penniless he deserted her, and Mrs. Shaw managed to get her a quiet divorce. She took Agatha and her boy, Peter, into her house and they've been living there ever since, at daggers' points. Please forgive me—the—brutality of the characterizations. I want you to know these people as they are."

"We're almost intimate already," chuckled Ellery. "John and Agatha," continued Mason, biting the head of his cane, "have been living for only one event—their stepmother's death. So that they might inherit, of course. Until a certain occurrence a few months ago Mrs. Shaw's will provided generously for them. But when that happened—"

Mr. Ellery Queen narrowed his gray eyes. "You mean—?"

"It's complicated," sighed the lawyer. "Three months ago there was an attempt on the part of someone in the household to poison the old lady!"

THE attempt was unsuccessful only because Dr. Arlen—Dr. Terence Arlen is the full name—had suspected such a possibility for years and had kept his eyes open. The cyanide—it was put in her tea—didn't reach Mrs. Shaw, but killed a house-cat. None of us, of course, knew who had made the poisoning attempt. But after that Mrs. Shaw changed her will."

"Now," muttered Ellery, "I am enthralled. Arlen, eh? That creates a fascinating mess. Tell me about Arlen, please."

"Rather mysterious old man with two passions: devotion to Mrs. Shaw and a hobby of painting. Quite an artist, too, though I know little about such things. He lived in the Shaw house about twenty years. A doctor

Mrs. Shaw picked up somewhere; I think only she knew his story, and he's always been silent about his past. She put him on a generous salary to live in the house and act as the family physician; I suspect it was rather because she anticipated what her step-children might attempt. And then, too, it's always seemed to me that Arlen accepted this unusual arrangement so tractably in order to pass out of—ah—circulation."

They were silent for some time. The chauffeur swung the car off the main artery into a narrow macadam road. Mason breathed heavily.

"I suppose you're satisfied," murmured Ellery at last through a fat smoke-ring, "that Mrs. Shaw died a month ago of natural causes?"

"Heavens, yes!" cried Mason. "Dr. Arlen wouldn't trust his own judgment, we were so careful; he had several specialists in, before and after her death. But she died of the last of a series of heart attacks; she was an old woman, you know. Something—thrombosis, they called it." Mason looked gloomy. "Well, you can understand Mrs. Shaw's natural reaction to the poisoning episode. 'If they're so depraved,' she told me shortly after, 'that they'd attempt my life, they don't deserve any consideration at my hands.' And she had me draw up a new will, cutting both of them off without a cent."

"There's an epigram," chuckled Ellery, "worthy of a better cause."

MASON tapped on the glass. "Faster, Burroughs." The car jolted ahead. "In looking about for a beneficiary, Mrs. Shaw finally remembered that there was someone to whom she could leave the Shaw fortune without feeling that she was casting it to the winds. Old John Shaw had had an elder brother, Morton, a widower with two grown children. The brothers quarrelled violently and Morton moved to England. He lost most of his money there; his two children, Edith and Percy, were left to shift for themselves when he committed suicide."

"These Shaws seem to have a penchant for violence."

"I suppose it's in the blood. Well, Edith and Percy both had talent of a sort, I understand, and they went on the London stage in a brother-and-sister music-hall act, managing well enough. Mrs. Shaw decided to leave her money to this Edith, her niece. I made inquiries by correspondence and discovered that Edith Shaw was now Mrs. Edythe Royce, a childless widow of many years' standing. On Mrs. Shaw's decease I cabled her and she crossed by the next boat. According to Mrs. Royce, Percy—her brother—was killed in an automobile accident on the Continent a few months before; so she had no ties whatever."

"And the will—specifically?"

"It's rather queer," sighed Mason. "The Shaw estate was enormous at one time, but the depression whittled it down to about three hundred thousand dollars. Mrs. Shaw left her niece two hundred thousand outright. The remainder, to his astonishment," and Mason paused and eyed his tall young companion with a curious fixity, "was put in trust for Dr. Arlen."

"Arlen, you say!"

"He was not to touch the principal, but was to receive the income from it for the remainder of his life. Interesting, eh?"

"That's putting it mildly." Ellery leaned forward. "And what was to be the disposition of Arlen's hundred-thousand-dollar trust on Arlen's death?"

The lawyer gazed grimly at the two rows of prim poplars flanking a manicured driveway on which the limousine was now noiselessly treading. "It was to be equally divided between John and Agatha," he said in a careful voice. The car rolled to a stop under a coldly white *porte-cochere*.

"I see," said Ellery. For it was Dr. Terence Arlen who had been murdered.

A COUNTY trooper escorted them through high Colonial halls into a remote and silent wing of the ample old house, up a staircase to a dim cool corridor patrolled by a nervous man with a bull neck.

"Oh, Mr. Mason," he said eagerly coming forward. "We've been waiting for you. This is Mr. Queen?" His tone changed from unguent haste to abrasive suspicion.

"Yes, yes. Murch of the county detectives, Mr. Queen. You've left everything intact, Murch?"

The detective grunted and stepped aside. Ellery found himself in the study of what appeared to be a two-room suite; beyond an open door he could see the white counterpane of a bird's-eye maple four-poster. A hole at some remote period had been hacked through the ceiling and covered with glass, admitting sunlight and converting the room into a skylight studio. The trivia of a painter's paraphernalia lay in confusion about the room, overpowering the few medical implements. There were easels, paint-boxes, a small dais, carelessly draped smocks, a profusion of daubs in oils and water-colors on the walls.

A little man was kneeling beside the outstretched figure of the dead doctor—a long brittle figure frozen in death, capped with curiously lambent silver hair. The wound was frank and deep; the delicately chased hilt of a stiletto protruded from the man's heart. There was very little blood.

Murch snapped: "Well, Doc, anything else?"

The little man rose and put his instruments away. "Died instantly from the stab-wound. Frontal blow, as you see. He tried to dodge at the last instant, I should say, but wasn't quick enough." He nodded and reached for his hat and quietly went out.

Ellery shivered a little. The studio was silent, and the corridor was silent, and the wing was silent; the whole house was crushed under the weight of a terrific silence that was almost uncanny. There was something indescribably evil in the air. . . . He shook his shoulders impatiently. "The stiletto, Captain Murch. Have you identified it?"

"Belonged to Arlen. Always right here on the table."

"No possibility of suicide, I suppose."

"Not a chance, Doc said."

Mr. Phineas Mason made a retching sound. "If you want me, Queen—" He stumbled from the room, awakening dismal echoes.

The corpse was swathed in a paint-smudged smock; in the stiff right hand a paint-brush, its hairs stained jet-black, was still clutched. A color-splashed palette had fallen face down on the floor near him. . . . Ellery did not raise his eyes from the stiletto. "Florentine, I suppose. Tell me what you've learned so far, Cap-



"Fire! Fire!" Everyone came scuttling out of

tain," he said absently. "I mean about the crime itself."

"Damned little," growled the detective. "Doc says he was killed about two in the morning—about eight hours ago. His body was found at seven this A.M. by a woman named Krutch, a nurse in the house here for a couple of years. Nice wench, by God! Nobody's got an alibi for the time of the murder, because according to their yarns they were all sleeping, and they all sleep separately. That's about the size of it."

"Precious little, to be sure," murmured Ellery. "By the way, Captain, was it Dr. Arlen's custom to paint in the wee hours?"

"Seems so. I thought of that, too. But he was a queer old cuss and when he was hot on something he'd work for twenty-four hours at a clip."

"Do the others sleep in this wing?"

"Nope. Not even the servants. Seems Arlen liked privacy, and whatever he liked, the old dame—Mrs. Shaw, who kicked off a month ago—said 'jake' to. Murch went to the doorway and snapped: 'Miss Krutch.'"

She came slowly out of Dr. Arlen's bedroom—a tall young woman who had been weeping. She was in nurse's uniform and there was nothing in common between her name and her appearance. In fact, as Ellery observed with appreciation, she was a distinctly attractive young woman with curves in precisely the right places. Miss Krutch, despite her tears, was the first ray of sunshine he had encountered in the big, old house.

"Tell Mr. Queen what you told me," directed Murch curtly.

"But there's so little," she quavered. "I was up before seven, as usual. My room's in the main wing, but there's a storeroom here for linens and things. . . . As I passed I—I saw Dr. Arlen lying on the floor, with the knife sticking up—The door was open and the light was on. I screamed. No one heard me. This is so far away. . . . I screamed and screamed and then Mr. Shaw came running, and Miss Shaw. Th—that's all."

"Did any of you touch the body, Miss Krutch?"

"Oh, no, sir!" She shivered.

"I see," said Ellery, and raised his eyes from the dead man to the easel above, casually, and looked away. And then instantly he looked back, his nerves tingling. Murch watched him with a sneer.

"How," jeered Murch, "d'ye like that, Mr. Queen?"



their rooms like frightened rats, but Ellery stood still as if searching for someone.

Ellery sprang forward. A smaller easel near the large one supported a picture. It was a cheap "processed" oil painting, a commercial copy of Rembrandt's famous self-portrait group, *The Artist and His Wife*. Rembrandt himself sat in the foreground, and his wife stood in the background. The canvas on the large easel was a half-finished replica of this painting. Both figures had been completely sketched in by Dr. Arlen and the brushwork begun—the lusty, smiling, mustached artist in his gayly plumed hat, his left arm about the waist of his Dutch-garbed wife.

And on the woman's chin there was painted a beard.

ELLERY gaped from the processed picture to Dr. Arlen's copy. But the one showed a woman's smooth chin, and the other—the doctor's—a squarish, expertly stroked black beard. And yet it had been daubed in hastily, as if the old painter had been working against time.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Ellery, glaring. "That's insane!"

"Think so?" said Murch blandly. "Me, I don't know. I've got a notion about it." He growled at Miss Krutch: "Beat it," and she fled from the studio, her long legs twinkling.

Ellery shook his head dazedly and sank into a chair, fumbling for a cigarette. "That's a new wrinkle to me, Captain. First time I've ever encountered in a homicide an example of the beard-and-mustache school of art—you've seen the pencilled hair on the faces of men and women in billboard advertisements? It's—"

And then his eyes narrowed as something leaped into them and he said abruptly: "Is Miss Agatha Shaw's boy—that Peter—in the house?"

Murch, smiling secretly as if he were enjoying a huge jest, went to the hallway door and roared something. Ellery got out of the chair and ran across the room and returned with one of the smocks, which he flung over the dead man's body.

A small boy with frightened yet inquisitive eyes came slowly into the room, followed by one of the most remarkable creatures Ellery had ever seen. This apparition was a large stout woman of perhaps sixty, with lined rugged features, so heavy they were almost wadded, painted, bedaubed, and varnished with an astounding cosmetic technique. Her lips, gross as they were, were shaped by rouge into a perfect and obscene Cupid's bow; her eyebrows had been tweezed to incredible thin-

ness; round rosy spots punctuated her sagging cheeks; and the whole rough heavy skin was floury with white powder.

But her costume was even more amazing than her face. For she was rigged out in Victorian style—a tight-waisted garment, almost bustle-hipped, full wide skirts that reached to her thick ankles, a deep and shiny bosom, and an elaborate boned lace choker-collar. . . . And then Ellery remembered that, since this must be Edythe Shaw Royce, there was at least a partial explanation for her eccentric appearance; she was an old woman, she came from England, and she was no doubt still basking in the vanished glow of her girlhood theatrical days.

"Mrs. Royce," said Murch mockingly, "and Peter."

"How d'ye do," muttered Ellery, tearing his eyes away. "Uh—Peter."

The boy, a sharp-featured and skinny little creature, sucked his dirty forefinger and stared.

"Peter!" said Mrs. Royce severely. Her voice was quite in tune with her appearance: husky and slightly cracked. Even her hair, Ellery noted with a wince, was nostalgic—a precise deep brown, frankly dyed. Here was one female, at least, who did not mean to yield to old age without a determined struggle.

"Peter," said Ellery, "look at that picture." Peter did so, reluctantly. "Did you put that beard on the face of the lady in the picture, Peter?"

Peter shrank against Mrs. Royce's voluminous skirts. "N-no!"

"Curious, isn't it?" said Mrs. Royce cheerfully. "I was remarking about that to Captain Burch—Murch only this morning. I'm sure Peter wouldn't have drawn the beard on *that* one. He'd learned his lesson, hadn't you, Peter?" Ellery remarked with alarm that the extraordinary woman kept screwing her right eyebrow up and drawing it deeply down, as if there were something in her eye that bothered her.

"Ah," said Ellery. "Lesson?"

"You see," went on Mrs. Royce, continuing her ocular gymnastics with unconscious vigor, "it was only yesterday that Peter's mother caught him drawing a beard with chalk on one of Dr. Arlen's paintings in Peter's bedroom. Dr. Arlen gave him a round hiding, I'm afraid, and himself removed the chalk-marks. Dear Agatha was so angry with poor Dr. Arlen. So you didn't do it, did you, Peter?"

"Naw," said Peter, who (*Please turn to page 101*)

Mark Harrell, the Taxi Detective, solves another baffling crime for the New York police, in his own inimitable way, as he traps a killer, recovers stolen jewels and rescues a pretty girl in distress!

"Don't shoot! I give up—
—I give up!" The girl
who faced them was as
helpless as a kitten.

Before DAWN

Tower Studios

THE silent streets of the city were cool dark tunnels of night; the coming day was merely a small distant fire below the eastern pavements.

In a still midtown block of darkened residences Mark Harrell, speeding Inspector John Farrand of Headquarters in response to an alarm, brought his Scarlet Tanager taxicab to a quick stop beneath a street light. The Inspector was already half out of the cab, spurred by a desperate urgency. A plainclothes man was waiting in a nearby doorway; he came out quickly.

The Inspector snapped, "Have you made your arrest?" "No, sir," said the detective in a tone of curt suspense. "Held off till you got here. The apartment is covered, front and rear. We called you the instant the burglar alarm flashed. Whoever it is, he's still up there. I saw a light in the windows a minute ago."

"Got the keys for a quick entrance?"

"Fitted them this afternoon when we set up the burglar alarm."

"Right!" Farrand glanced grimly at the tall luxurious apartment house opposite. "Well, we'll go up and take him. You—" he hesitated, eyeing Harrell coldly, reluctantly—"I suppose you'll want to come along."

Without waiting for assent, the Inspector led the way rapidly across the street.

Mark Harrell smiled a small, undisturbed smile as they shot upward in the elevator. The Inspector was ignoring him pointedly. Farrand was a veteran and a professional; he could only view with scorn the intrusion of an amateur. But it was a morsel he must

swallow. Police Commissioner Ryan was himself an amateur, a brilliant executive given to sudden shrewd hunches, among the most successful of which had proved to be Mark Harrell, retired ship's officer and the unassuming Taxi Detective of growing renown. Harrell, mysteriously and urgently summoned out of bed in the early morning, was here at the Commissioner's express command, a free-lance on special service—and a certain magnet for departmental skepticism and a measure of jealousy.

HARELL'S smile grew a little grim; these assignments were not of his choosing. He scrambled for none of the honors they contained, though they were, following a lifetime of responsibility and command, a duty he was powerless to shirk. From the few details he knew, this seemed a straight police job, and he was wholly willing, as Farrand pointedly hinted, merely to "come along." There was, he knew, a certain dangerous character named Jim Ireton wanted by the police; a trap was set in the man's abandoned apartment—some one had now entered, touching off the alarm, and the trap was ready to be sprung. No more than this had the Inspector vouchsafed.

Two detectives were on post on the seventh floor, balefully on watch at a door to a front apartment. They rendered a terse, low-voiced report that told nothing new.

"We'll go on in," Farrand ordered. He warned, "And mind—the man's a killer. Take him if possible, but if there's to be any shooting, see that you shoot first."



By

WILLIAM CORCORAN

beams from their flashlights. Harrell followed Farrand.

Beyond a small entry lay a sumptuous living-room, a place of rose satin and ivory and fragile rich ornament. A deep soft carpet muffled their tread. They scattered, feeling their way eerily.

A thin line of light showed beneath a door. One detective motioned the others aside. He gripped the knob and threw open the door.

It was a bedroom; the illumination came from a bathroom beyond. There came a quick sound of consternation, a crash of broken glass, and a desperate scramble of flight. A door slammed.

The detectives shouted a command to halt, rushed into the bathroom. Another door led from the bathroom. They charged the door, reckless and deadly, and burst upon black darkness.

It was a connecting bedroom. Their quarry was gone. They switched on the lights and made search, furiously, opening doors, peering under the bed, behind draperies.

"Here he is!" a detective yelled tensely. He leveled his gun at some masculine garments hanging in a clothes closet. "Come out of there, you . . ."

Nothing stirred. Then the garments shook in sudden frenzy.

"Don't shoot! I give up—I give up!"

The lurking fugitive bolted forth in abject fright.

They all stood frozen, stunned. This was no killer—this was a young woman, very pale, pretty, unarmed, no more dangerous than a kitten.

INSPECTOR FARRAND'S forceful jaw was out-thrust in furious disappointment. "Who the devil are you, may I ask?"

"My name is Beaudry," she said hastily. "Albertine Beaudry. 'I—'"

"You're under arrest for illegal entry," he barked. "What are you doing here?"

The girl quailed and sent a quick dismayed look at all their faces. It lingered a fractional second on Harrell, as if seeing in his ironic, amused detachment a single likelihood of hope.

"I was just going to tell you—" she said anxiously. "I mean, I live here, officer. I thought you were burglars."

"You lie! Jim Ireton lives here." She brightened. "Oh, but I've sub-let. He's gone."

"We know that. That's why we're here. Where is he?"

"I have no idea." Her pretty face sobered. "I haven't seen him. I just moved in."

"In the last fifteen minutes?" Suddenly he clutched her arm hard. "Where's Ireton?" he roared.

"I haven't any idea."

The local men had by police custom the dangerous precedence of entry. In tense silence they unlocked the door.

The elevator operator took shelter in his cage and peered apprehensively out from cover. Harrell waited, watchful and wary, as the door swung noiselessly open.

Darkness and silence lay beyond. The detectives entered, probing the menacing dark with sudden quick

"You won't talk then? You won't come through?" "Oh—" she winced in his grip. "I really haven't any idea. Really, officer."

Farrand let her go. His blue eyes flashed sparks. The girl stared at him accusingly, angry and apprehensive.

"So that's the game we'll play at?" said Farrand, his voice quivering with a terrible cold wrath. "We're not going to talk when we're told to, eh? Well, we'll waste no time on that! Boland, call the wagon. Take this one in and book her for burglary. Shoot her up to another precinct immediately where her friends won't find her in a hurry. O'Brien—you and your partner look around. See if anything's been disturbed. Be quick about it. If Diamond Jim Ireton don't show up, we'll bring in a haul of his friends."

Alarm fired the girl anew. "Oh, don't take me in! Please, please. I didn't steal anything."

"We'll find that out when the matron gets to work on you," Farrand said brutally. He was deliberate about it; he was a skilled policeman, and shrewd brutality was one of the keenest tools of his trade. "I'll work on you myself. Little alley cats of your kind are no novelty to me. Go on down to the wagon."

The girl shrank from him. She looked again at Harrell, beseechingly, terrified. She seemed on the verge of urgent, momentous speech.

But a detective gave her a blunt poke. "Get moving."

The girl dropped her eyes and started across the room in blind misery.

Mark Harrell's cool gray gaze was hard and his mouth was wry and unpleasant as he turned on his heel and followed, watching the girl's small bowed shoulders, so stricken with numb despair.

Inspector Farrand rode to the precinct house in the taxicab. The bitterness of his disappointment was acid, and he was spurred to talk. He sat on the folding seat while Harrell drove swiftly through the gray morning.

"I don't mind saying I fail to see the need of you on this case," he said bluntly. "But I got the orders to rouse you out, direct from the Commissioner. You might as well know what's doing. You've read about the Medici Crown disappearance, haven't you?"

Harrell had. Everyone had. The case was a sensational mystery; the glitter of priceless Medici jewels had cast a halo of fascination about the theft of the famous gem-studded 16th Century golden crown worn long ago by Cosimo I, Duke of Florence and first Grand Duke of Tuscany.

"Is this Ireton involved?" asked Harrell over his shoulder.

"Over his head. We can't prove it—yet. If we had him in hand, maybe we'd make shift. We have ways. He has an unwritten criminal record as long as the

right arm of Primo Carnera, and he's never had a conviction. He's smart enough to have figured out an entirely new racket. Traffic in most stolen commodities is ruined by bad times. Kidnaping flourished a while, but then turned too dangerous. This Ireton bucko has taken to kidnaping art treasures and holding them for ransom. If no ransom is paid, the things are destroyed. There's no way to trace the loot, as there is in robbery. He's eliminated most of the risk of thievery and practically all the risk of kidnaping. It was Ireton made away with the Medici Crown from the rich Glendenning collection."

"How?"

"That, none of us can tell exactly," Farrand spoke angrily, as of a blot on the escutcheon of the Force that must be erased. "By devilish cunning. Plainly he studied the routine and lay-out of the Glendenning mansion on Fifth Avenue and found a loophole. None of those private collections are ever properly policed, and it's me, a cop, that says so, if ever you're asked. He got in, and he got out. Plainly he had keys made for the place and enjoyed the freedom of it. And one morning five weeks ago the watchman on his rounds simply found the Medici case broken open and the crown missing. There was never a clue. Not until a letter came demanding a quarter million dollars of ransom was a trace of the thing ever found."

"Is Glendenning willing to pay?"

"The Commissioner persuaded him to refuse. The responsibility is all ours. The last minute of grace is up at nightfall this day. We must break the case now—or the crown is gone forever."

Harrell smiled grimly. The immeasurable loss of the treasure was as nothing beside the humiliation to the Department. "How do you know Ireton did it?"

"We have ways. We were told. We don't look our secret information too closely in the mouth. We're not interested in fancy detective work; we know who did the job. What we must do is get the crown back. Ireton knows we want him and is satisfied to hide out. More than satisfied, by the way he's kept clear of us. We watched the apartment for days; only this afternoon in desperation we withdrew all the men posted near it, trying to lure him back. We left a burglar alarm to let us know," Farrand swore. "And this piece of fluff is our pinch!" He swore again, furious at the mere thought of his chagrin.

THEY were approaching the station-house. Harrell's cool eyes were narrow, and he said nothing.

Nor, for that matter, did Harrell have occasion for speech inside when the inquisition began. He looked on and listened, and he stood by at intervals in the detectives' room where they cornered the girl Albertine Beaudry and hammered incessant questions at her.



Ireton was no longer sane. He brought his gun to bear, leveled on the girl and Harrell—

Harrell's calm gray gaze studied her long. In anguish and despair she clung to the story they pried out of her.

"I tell you I never even saw this Jim Ireton," she told them, weeping. "I'm from a place out of town, and I'll never tell you where because it would be too terrible. Can't you understand what I'm saying? It's on account of my sister. She's unhappily married and very young. She fell in love with this Ireton; she never knew what kind of man he was. She wrote him letters, crazy, lonesome love letters, and suddenly he turned around and blackmailed her with them. She was only young and foolish, and a man like that could ruin her. The scandal would kill our parents. It's too terrible to think of. I hid in that house for hours tonight and then crawled on a ledge and climbed in a window. I wanted those letters back and I was ready to commit burglary to get them. You must believe me!" she gasped. "You must let me go. Don't you see what you're doing?"

But they were cold, hard-boiled. They cared little what they were doing.

"Why won't you let us wire your chief of police and check this?" Farrand flung at her. "We've got you booked for a major felony, and you'll either clear yourself damn quick or take a rap for the limit we can get out of the jury."

She looked at him. She was silent. She was at the end of her tether. Her eyes were unnaturally big, and dark-ringed; her face was drawn of blood. "You really mean that?"

"I mean it."

"Then . . ." she said, faltering and recovering starkly. "Then there's nothing else. I can't betray my sister. I can't. I've got to go to prison if you say."

Farrand towered over her, tortured by his impotence, shouting, "You'll go to prison and I'll hound you when you come out of prison. . . ."

But Farrand abruptly stopped. Albertine Beaudry had fainted.

The name Albertine Beaudry was a fiction, of course. Nothing in her possession hinted at her true name. The Criminal Identification Bureau labored vainly. Her finger-prints matched none in the files; a photograph swiftly taken and rushed downtown resembled none in the Gallery. Time and the irresistible patience of the police would break down the mystery, of course—but there was no time. The day was drawing on, and the vast city hid its secret securely.

Inspector Farrand was like a crazy man in his raging despair. Mark Harrell stopped him outside the detectives' room.

"Inspector, may I offer a suggestion?"

"No!" roared Farrand instantly.

"You'll listen to it, at least," Harrell told him bluntly.

Farrand gazed at him. "What is it?"

"Let me have the girl alone in my custody and on my responsibility for one hour."

Farrand choked a little. "You? Turn her loose with you?"

"You've talked the girl hoarse and the case is at a standstill. It's time I had my chance, whether you like it or not."

Farrand blew up, literally blasting Harrell out of his way and strode out of the room, absolutely denying the request.

Harrell let the officer go. He wore a small dry smile as he picked up a telephone and put through an official call.

Four minutes later a uniformed man hastened to find Inspector Farrand. Harrell was now leaning idly in a doorway, watching.

"The Commissioner?" said Farrand. "He wants to talk to me? At this hour?"

"He's on the wire, sir," said the policeman earnestly.

Farrand hastened to the telephone. What he heard, none of those about the station-house learned. But the high color of his face changed and the sparks faded from his eyes, and briefly answering, he hung up and made for Harrell. He looked at him opaquely an instant.



"All right," he said in a snarl. "You can have her. Orders are orders. But the responsibility's no longer mine. And I'll not forget that you went over my head, Harrell."

Harrell shrugged dryly. "I've got my orders, too, Inspector."

The Inspector turned on his heel and strode away. It was an intensely relieved but very mystified young woman Mark Harrell drove away from the station-house five minutes later. She snapped down the folding seat in the cab and sat where she could look at Harrell's face as he drove. She was fairly breathless with mystification.

"What's happened?" she demanded. "Where are we going? Are you a policeman, too?"

"I'm a hackman," Harrell said ironically. "Did you happen to take note how I rated among those cops?"

She declined to take this at face value. Well, whatever you are, you're good! You got me out—and I thought I was in for life, at least. Tell me where you're taking me?"

(Please turn to page 77)

FREDERICK NEBEL, popular young author of best-selling novels and short stories, returns to **MYSTERY MAGAZINE** with another heart-stirring story in which **Marcus Corcoran**, the beloved district attorney in "Murder Offstage," again plays the role of the human prosecutor. He hated to find a lovely girl mixed up in a nasty murder; but he did and also—the killer!

JACOBS, the coroner's man, got up from his knees and clicked shut his black satchel. The cuffs of his trousers had become hitched up almost to his stout calves; he stamped the cuffs down to his shoe tops, set his satchel on a small Sheraton table and drummed his stubby heels across the bare floor to the bathroom, drawing up his sleeves.

A portrait of a girl, still in rough outline, stood on an easel at the north end of the studio.

In the center of the room, near a divan, Charles Bennett, the artist, lay dead.

Inspector Tom Rockford, a hard-boiled big man, stood with one foot planted on a small stool. He leaned with one elbow on his jacked-up knee, dangling in his hand a long, stiletto-like letter-opener with a curved ivory handle. A brown Hom-burg was on the back on his head. He stared with blank-eyed concentration at the dead man.

Two uniformed policemen and Anton Schlaik, the janitor, stood in the background. Schlaik was a tall, bony, stoop-shouldered man dressed in a coarse black suit. His bald head leaned far forward and his large, protuberant eyes hung mournfully in their sockets. Farther back, Philip Davidson, a lean youth with a long, aesthetic neck and curly blond hair, stood worrying the brim of his hat with thin, pale fingers.

When Marcus Corcoran, the district attorney, drifted in swinging a stick, one of the policemen turned, touched a finger to the visor of his cap. Corcoran, without pausing in his leisurely progress, slipped the stick beneath his arm and came into the wide pool of light where the dead man lay and Tom Rockford stood with his foot planted on the stool.

Corcoran's voice was quiet, unamazed: "Murder, eh, Tom?"

"Hello, Marcus. Yeah."

Corcoran stood back on his heels, bending his brows above his strong, straight nose, drawing off his chamolais gloves. He was terse but amiable. "Who is he?"

"Charles Bennett."

Corcoran squinted around the studio. "He the artist?"

"Yeah. This is his place." Rockford held up the letter-opener. "This is part of the pretty picture."

"Finger-prints?"

Rockford grunted. "Swell chance!"



KILLED

JACOBS came, drumming his heels across the bare studio floor and drying his hands. "Hello, Mr. Corcoran. The fellow certainly got it neat, didn't he? Yes, sir—right through the old pump!" He pointed. "That thingamabob Tom's playing with. Moral: Tear your letters open; never have one of those things around."

"Is that Bennett's?" Corcoran asked.

"Of course. His initials are on it," Rockford said.

"Anything startling?"

Rockford growled under his breath and swung his foot down from the stool. He scowled irritably at Schlaik and then he scowled at Philip Davidson. He tossed a thumb toward Schlaik and said, "That's the janitor and caretaker for these apartments here—name o' Schlaik. The other fellow's name's Davidson. From what I can gather, Charles Bennett walked into something. You can see how his desk has been rifled and that there cash box forced open. It looks like murder and robbery. It looks like Bennett walked in on the rob-

By FREDERICK NEBEL

Ben Ricardo was muttering, "That D. A., he ought to have his face caved in."

Corcoran didn't relish the job he had ahead of him.

"What time was it when you came in here?" Corcoran asked, strolling over to look at the unfinished portrait on the easel.

"About ten-thirty."

Rockford put in, "When I arrived, Bennett was laying there with his overcoat still on. It was unbuttoned but he had it still on. Which is why I claim he walked right into what he got." He flung a hand toward the blond youth. "Davidson, there, arrived a few minutes after Schlaik was supposed to have discovered Bennett dead. Tell the district attorney, Davidson."

Davidson ran a hand up through his hair. "Well, I came up the stairs at about half-past ten and I knocked on the door there, and in a minute it was opened by Mr. Schlaik. He—he looked very upset, very white and shocked, and I asked him if Mr. Bennett was in. He couldn't say anything for a minute. I guess he was so shocked, and then he took hold of my arm and pulled me in and pointed to—the body."

Corcoran asked, "Why were you coming to see Mr. Bennett? Are you a friend of his?"

Davidson swallowed. "Well—no, I'm not. I'm thinking of taking up an art course. I phoned Mr. Bennett yesterday and asked him if he'd give me an interview and perhaps a little advice on the best way to go about it. He said he was busy during the day but if I came by at night, well, he'd be glad to do what he could. So—well, I came by tonight—and—well, there he was—dead." He swallowed again and then broke into a fit of coughing which drove red color across his pale face. Presently the spell passed and he sat breathing rapidly and worrying the brim of his hat.

Rockford then barked, "You seem damned nervous, Mr. Davidson!"

"I am," Davidson nodded. "I'm not well, anyhow, and—well, walking in on a thing like this—" He coughed again, holding his hand up to his mouth.

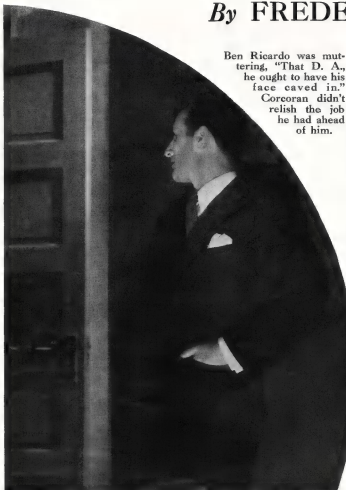
Corcoran was saying, "How about the other tenants, Tom? Did you quiz them?"

"The apartment next this is empty. So is the one under this. I sent Jake Holman around to the others, just in case. It looks like pure murder and robbery to me, Marcus."

Corcoran said, "The only thing that's not pure about it is the weapon. If this'd been a professional job, the robber would have carried his own weapon. If he was addicted to a gun, he'd have shot Bennett; if to a knife, he'd have had his own knife. It looks to me, Tom, like a panicky job. I mean, when the killer was surprised, he grabbed something—"

Corcoran paused and lifted his chin. "Mr. Schlaik, did Mr. Bennett have many women visitors?"

SCHLAIK was staring glassy-eyed at the corpse. He started, said, "I guess he did, sir; models and things. I don't know for sure, though. There used to be women in here sometimes when I came in, but I always went about minding my own business



Zoom Studio

after 10 P. M.

ber and the robber let him have it through the heart."

Corcoran strolled to the desk, laid down derby, gloves and stick. He turned, saying offhand, "How do you know he walked in?" and rubbed a handkerchief briefly across his nose.

Rockford nodded toward Schlaik. "He said he met Bennett coming in a few minutes past ten tonight. Down three flights, in the ground-floor hall. Right, Schlaik?"

Schlaik nodded with his whole gaunt body and said in a hoarse croak of a voice, "Yes, sir. I met Mr. Bennett when he came in. It was a cold night out and he asked me to bring up some logs for his fireplace. I had my overcoat and hat on, account of I was going out for a walk. I go out for a walk every night so's I can sleep good. I asked him if it would be all right if I brought the logs up in twenty minutes or half an hour and he said yes. So when I brought the logs up, he—well, I seen him on the floor."

and I didn't pay no attention to them."

There was a stir at the doorway and Detective Jake Holman came in with a short, white-haired old man wrapped in a dressing-gown. Holman was gaunt, beetle-browed.

He said, "Hi, Mr. Corcoran." And then: "This is Mr. Graves. He lives in the second floor front. Mr. Graves, this is District Attorney Corcoran and that's Inspector Rockford. Tell them what you told me."

Graves did not appear to relish his position. "I don't think there's anything in it, gentlemen. Mr. Holman was questioning me about a lot of things and he happened to mention Schlaik and he asked me if by any chance I knew if Schlaik was hard up. I said I didn't really know, and then I happened to remember that about two weeks ago Schlaik asked me if I could loan him fifty dollars. I couldn't, and I told him."

Schlaik stared stonily at the floor.

Rockford ripped out, "You hear that, Schlaik?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you manage to get that fifty from someone else?"

Schlaik's fists hung limply. "No, sir."

Rockford spun on Davidson. "Did you notice his

Schlaik said in a hoarse, choked voice, "I had to have some dentist work done. It would have cost seventy-five and I figured if I could get fifty, then I could make up the rest out of my salary."

"Did you ever see Bennett put money in that box?"

Schlaik shook his head. "No."

"I'll bet you're a damned liar!" Rockford growled.

Corcoran was holding the vest which Bennett had worn and which the man from the coroner's office had removed. "Look at this, Tom," he said. He crossed to Rockford, passed him a magnifying glass the size of a fifty-cent piece. "Look through this, Tom, and tell me what you see on this vest."

Rockford looked. "Cigarette ash."

"Look again."

"It still looks like—"

Corcoran said, "It's face powder. Right around the spot above his heart."

"So what?" Rockford growled angrily.

"I think," Corcoran said, "that when Bennett lay on the floor a woman leaned down to listen to his heart beats. Maybe he'd harmed her some time ago. Maybe she came here seeking redress. Maybe he told her to get out. Maybe. . . ." He shrugged, draped the vest

on the back of a chair.

Rockford groaned. "Oh Lord, now you're dragging a woman in it, Marcus!"

"Why not? I said I thought it looked like a panicky job. It's the kind of instrument a woman would grab."

"But it was robbery, Marcus!" Rockford shook a fist toward the desk. "Robbery!"

"That," said Corcoran, strolling to the desk, "is one part that puzzles me."

He ran his fingers through a hodge-podge of odds and ends on the desk, scooped up a small leather address book, thumbed the pages, glancing idly at the alphabetically arranged names. The "E" page was missing. He could see that it had been ripped out. He made a small, ruminative sound behind his teeth, baring them slightly.

"Hanh?" grunted Tom Rockford, at his elbow.

"This," Corcoran murmured in a low voice. "A page missing. The book's new—still stiff. See if there's a telephone book around. See if he checked anything in the E's."

Rockford found a telephone directory in a drawer of the desk, thumbed to the E's, found nothing checked. A rectangular ruled card, about eight by six inches, flew out of the book as he tossed it down. Corcoran picked up the card. At the top it advertised artists' supplies. Below this heading were the ruled lines. There were about a dozen scrawled names, with telephone numbers.

Corcoran's eyes stopped on the fifth name from the bottom. Marjory Eden. Belmont 2030. He looked for the name in the telephone directory but did not find it. "It's the only E," he remarked quietly, partly to himself.

Rockford still looked disgruntled. "You're chasing rainbows, Marcus—chasing rainbows."

"How about Bennett's relatives?"

"They live way the hell out in Phoenix."

"You'd better wire them (Please turn to page 92)



"Did Bennett ever try to make love to you?" Corcoran asked.

hands when he opened the door?"

Davidson stammered, "N-no, I didn't."

"Did you meet anyone on your walk, Schlaik?" Rockford demanded.

"I—no, I didn't meet no one."

Graves said, "Really, Inspector, I don't think Schlaik had anything to do with it."

"You don't know anything about it," Rockford flung back at him. And to Schlaik, "Why did you want that fifty?"



To the young man's astonishment, Riley Dillon did not budge in the least.

Stained RUBIES

ON the same evening that witnessed the shocking murder of General Nichols, any such contingency was far from the thoughts of Riley Dillon.

It was of the Malabar rubies that he was thinking, as he dined lightly and at leisure in the main dining room of the Drake. He had never seen them, but he knew every one of them intimately. It was his business to know all the famous stones in the world, and all about them to boot.

Before midnight, or shortly after, Riley Dillon meant to have the Malabar rubies himself.

His meal finished, he sauntered down to the street level, and en route encountered cheerful nods on every hand. Those thinly carved but laughing features of his, those merry gray eyes, drew quick friendliness. At the entrance, Dillon favored his friend the starter with one of his precious Havanas, and the man in uniform beamed as he saluted.

"In precisely half an hour," said Dillon, "will you have a rented car here for me? Hire it for the evening.

To Riley Dillon, gallant Irish Raffles, jewels were the breath of life. Between them and a woman he never hesitated—or hardly ever; but from the moment he saw Anne Nichols' matchless beauty, the audacious rogue was a lost man, and he knew it

By RODNEY BLAKE

I can't very well go in a taxicab to the Nichols' reception and dance, with half of Chicago there, eh? A fine old chap, General Nichols."

"One of the finest in the world, Mr. Dillon," agreed the starter, who naturally knew everyone who was anyone. "Marvelous how he pulled that bank of his out of the hole after the crash, last year! Still, I hear he

made a lot of enemies. People lost money, and that hurts. A hard man, the old general is, a fighter all through! But that's the best kind."

"True for you," Riley Dillon agreed. He turned back toward the elevators, slim and straight in his impeccable evening attire.

In front of him, an elevator disgorged an uproarious, rowdy throng evidently just from a party in one of the hotel rooms, as the liquor-thick voices testified. A dark young man whose silk hat was thrust over one ear, collided with Dillon. His arm shot out and with an irritated oath he shoved—shoved hard. To his astonishment, Riley Dillon did not budge in the least.

Instead, Dillon hooked two fingers inside the young blood's high dress collar and then shook him violently, casting him aside to skid over the floor and collide with the nearest pillar. Riley Dillon smiled amiably.

"Faith, if it's shoving you're after," he said lightly, "there's one for you—"

The liquor-laden young man got his bearings and rushed, but his companions and two hotel employes intervened. He was led forth cursing, and with a laugh, Dillon entered a car and was shot up to his own floor. He thought nothing more of the incident; but he was to think of it, and think hard, ere this memorable evening was over.

IN his own corner room that overlooked the garish lights of the North Shore, Riley Dillon sat at his desk, and beneath the shaded light went over very carefully the final details of his night's work.

Riley Dillon loved jewels passionately and tenderly. To him, these bits of glittering stone were the very breath of life. Between a glorious jewel and a glorious woman he never—or hardly ever—hesitated.

Yet, with few peers as an expert of precious stones, Riley Dillon kept his knowledge a secret. No one guessed what passed within that keenly alert brain, or the swift, deft genius that reposed in those slender carefully kept fingers of his. And it should be noted that Riley Dillon never stole for profit. If the moral principles involved were dubious, his own code of ethics was a rigid one.

His campaign was not so simple this time. General Lucas Nichols, banker, soldier, connoisseur, owned the Malabar rubies. They had been presented to him by a grateful European power whose finances he had rescued from chaos. General Nichols also had three children, and tonight he was entertaining the elect of Chicago in honor of his youngest daughter's birthday.

Riley Dillon smiled as he pocketed the engraved and numbered invitation. He had once seen General Nichols at a distance, it is true, but this bit of cardboard had cost him quite a bit of finesse and cash. To a casual glance, however, it was quite authentic.

"One can't pocket the Malabar rubies," thought Dillon cheerfully, "without a bit of cost and trouble. One more glance at the house plans, now, and we're ready."

He bent once more over the roughly sketched but accurate plan of the Nichols mansion, whose distant lights could almost be discerned from the window before him.

One reason for Riley Dillon's success was that he never neglected details. He must have every feature of that house clearly in his head against any emergency, from the great ballroom on the third floor down to the famous "Nichols Sanctum" on the side of the



Tanner Studios

house overlooking the beautifully kept gardens.

In this "sanctum" which other men would have termed a library, had been made both financial and political history. Here the eccentric millionaire, with a touch of pardonable vanity, kept his medals, honors and trophies; and not the least of these mementos of his career were the Malabar rubies.

A glance at his watch, and Riley Dillon rose. The evening was warm; no overcoat was needed. The house plans he tore into tiny fragments and cast from the window. Turning with a gay whistle—the old lilting tune of Lillibulero was most frequent on his lips—he picked up his green ebony stick, donned his silk hat, and drew on his gloves. Some said it was bad luck to whistle, but Riley Dillon believed only in good luck.

The ordered car was awaiting him below.

Twenty minutes later, crawling along in line with limousines and town cars, it halted beneath the portecochere of the glittering Nichols mansion. Upon the attendants at the doors, Riley Dillon bestowed his hat and stick, his heart-warming smile, and his invitation; he was announced without question.

Welcoming his guests stood the widowed general, his two daughters, and his son. General Nichols was straight as an arrow despite his sixty years, choleric and dictatorial. For one flashing instant Riley Dillon caught the eye of the elder daughter; from that instant he was a lost man, and knew it.

He advanced. Audacious, whimsical, he shook hands

with the general and mentioned mutual friends. His gay smile, his charm of manner, carried it off superbly. Then he was shaking hands with Anne Nichols, was looking into her eyes, and was forgetting all about the Malabar rubies. He met the younger daughter, he was introduced to the son—

And the son was the young man whom he had encountered by the Drake elevators. Sober now, but flushing darkly with recognition.

"An unexpected pleasure," he said ironically, as Dillon extended a hand. "But in my own house—" and he gave Dillon a quick, hard, resentful grip. "What was the name?"

"The name is Riley Dillon," and Dillon, gray eyes twinkling, clapped him on the shoulder. "Come,

think no more of what's past!" he went on cheerfully, deliberately accentuating his touch of brogue. "Had I known you were the brother of Anne Nichols, you could have pushed me all over the place. And both of us with a drop too much, maybe—eh?"

The other laughed, none too genially. "Oh, you're a friend of Anne's, eh? Well, if you put it that way, perhaps—nonsense! Let it pass, Mr. Dillon. Look me up later."

Dillon went his way. Among the scores of guests, his distinguished air and his perfect ease, which is the touchstone of social credit, made him instantly at home. Within another half hour he was on friendly terms with a dozen people, but he forgot them all when he came to dance with Anne Nichols.

Too impulsive for his own good, Riley Dillon found himself captivated.

Her mystery, her beauty, fascinated him. Dark, lovely, impetuous, Anne Nichols was known for her lack of conventional restraint, for her general disdain of society and marriage in favor of art. Already, at twenty-four, her oils were hung in numerous museums, and the artistic world was opening wide to her.

Riley Dillon danced with her once. He danced with her twice. Then she turned her back on all the gay throng and went strolling through the gardens with him, talking of Cellini and Matisse and things in between. Already they were warm, sure friends, but something in her air, in her eyes and voice, disquieted Dillon. He divined something amiss with her life.

"Why did you tell Robert that we were friends?" she asked suddenly, without warning.

"Devil and all, isn't it true?" retorted Dillon whimsically.

"It wasn't then. He asked me about you, and—"

"And you backed me up? Good for you!" Dillon exclaimed. "Well, my dear, if you must have it, from the first moment I caught sight of you, I knew we were friends. And there was but one way of meeting you—to come here tonight. So I came, and your father himself introduced us, and devil take the rest! And now I find you're an unhappy woman, and I'm sad for you."

This was shifting the attack with a vengeance. She halted and stood looking at him.

"Yes," went on Dillon gravely. "It's an impudent rascal I am, but what of it? Between us is a spell like old intimacy this night; whether it's your goodness or my roguery that draws us together, my dear, what matter? Listen to me, now. There's some sore trouble eating at your heart. It shows in your eyes and your words. Is it a thing that can be given help or aid, I'm asking you?"

She stood astonished, meeting his direct, incisive gaze in the reflected glow of the house lights. Then she laughed a little, in embarrassment.

"What a suddenly intimate stranger you are, Mr. Dillon! Undoubtedly I should be angry, but it's rather hard not to like you a little."

"A true word you spoke there," said Riley Dillon heartily. "Didn't I know at once that you were not the person to misunderstand me? A sensible fine girl she is, I said to myself, and a sensible woman never misunderstands anyone."

"You do know a lot about women, don't you?" she replied, and laughed softly as she met his gaze. Then her hand went out and through his arm, and she was at his side again. "You're a queer, dear sort of (Please turn to page 54)



Riley Dillon's alert nostrils caught the odor of blood; his eyes searched the floor—and found it, coming from beneath the screen.

A real department for MYSTERY readers! Write your opinions and suggestions for MYSTERY MAGAZINE every month. Tell us what story you like best—who your favorite mystery writer is. For every letter published we will pay one dollar. And, remember, if you don't like this magazine, be frank and say so! Write to the MYSTERY Editor, Tower Magazines, Inc., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.



A BIG OPINION

DENVER, COLORADO—May I offer the following opinion of MYSTERY MAGAZINE?

Cover and general make-up—Very high class.

Stories—Interesting, entertaining and suitable for the entire family.

Favorite authors—Albert Payson Terhune and Sax Rohmer.

Articles—Ablely written and very helpful.

Book-length novel—Worth many times the price of the book.

Family Opinion—We ought to have five copies and have them twice each month; it's the biggest dime's worth in the world.

Mrs. F. A. Buda

FIRE AND HIRED

DETROIT, MICHIGAN—Just why is it I never have any luck? On the first of May I found MYSTERY, for the first time, on the magazine shelf at the drug store. I can honestly say that I have never seen as keen a magazine.

To prove how good the magazine is, I forgot about getting back to my job after lunch and was fired; however, I told my boss what to do about it and that if he had ever read a story half as good as "The Imperfect Twins" I would eat his shirt. My boss bawled me out, then in a low voice asked me where I got the magazine.

I don't gush and I hate people that do. I have never written a fan letter of any kind before so I hope you understand my inadequate praise of MYSTERY, the stories and the nominal price.

Elizabeth Cady

MYSTERY IN THE SPRING

CHICAGO, ILL.—Perhaps these beautiful spring days inspired all our MYSTERY authors, for they all came through with a bang. I enjoyed every story to the nth degree, but, of course, I picked my favorites. The very best of all the swell stories was the "Murder on the Fast Express"; and, of course, Stuart Palmer and Ellery Queen came through with flying colors as usual. "The Imperfect Twins" didn't lack anything either in way of entertainment, but why, oh why, did

Cobden Claine have to die; why couldn't it have been Dick Delchester? I'm sure no one would have cared. Can't authors understand that we, the readers of their stories, don't like to have any character that we're interested in, die?

Elaine Hart

TASTES DIFFER

CLEVELAND, OHIO—"Resolutions"—runs an old adage—"are made to be broken." And I guess they are for I had made a resolution never to pester an editor with letters of any sort. But, the truth is that being a detective and mystery story addict I can't keep from writing you to pat you on the back for putting out a magazine like MYSTERY. There isn't a magazine half as good being published either in America or anywhere else. It's a magazine that even Sherlock Holmes would have on a desk in his Baker Street residence. And I guess that like the rest of us, he would be pestering friends to read it or phoning them that the latest issue had just come out, for MYSTERY is that kind of a magazine. You don't have to wipe blood off its cover as you do of the run of the mill pulp magazines. And you don't throw it in the furnace after you've finished it; you either let it lie with the family magazines on the living-room table or pass it on to a friend.

Of course, tastes differ. Personally I never read anything even halfway through if written by Rohmer, LaCossit, Ripperger or Footner. Their stuff is too pulpy. At least to me it is.

On the other hand anything by Queen, Starret, Pearson, Eberhart, Surdez, Palmer, is devoured by me. My pet is Stuart Palmer. His "Murder on the Blackboard" and his short stories rank very high as detective fiction. Mignon Eberhart is almost as good and I would like to know why you haven't given us a complete novel by her, featuring Miss Keate? Not that there's anything wrong with the novels that have appeared. They have all been first rate. The last three "Cursed Gold," "Going to St. Ives" and "Black Fog" were excellent. But a novel by Eberhart would be something special. I hope to see one before this year is out.

Alex Pappas, Jr.

A FAMILY TREAT

UPLAND, CALIFORNIA—There are four of us in our family, and I must say there is something of



Line-Up

interest in your MYSTERY MAGAZINE for all of us.

It is in our house and everyone has had a grab at it before it has been on sale twenty-four hours. One member of our family has repeatedly brought home the same issue and when we quiz him about it he says "Aw shucks," I wish they'd print one twice a month.

I feel sure he isn't alone in that idea.

It sure has been a life saver to us on different occasions when other entertainment was out of the question. Everyone is happy and contented while absorbing its contents. I myself wish it would come out twice a month if only for peace and quietness. It's just a case of "grabber's luck" once the book is free and laid down on the table.

No need to go into detail as to which story or article each one likes best. For I know each and every word is read and enjoyed by all of us: the ads, beauty articles, thrillers, cookery, patterns, complete novels, etc.

We are all satisfied and say it is one dime very well spent.

Mary Stainton

RIGHT IN THE TEETH

WAUWATOSA, WIS.—You ask us to be frank and tell you if we don't like the MYSTERY MAGAZINE. I'll be frank and say I do like it.

But if you must have criticism, here it is—

In the June issue we read in "The Riddle of the Blueblood Murders" by Stuart Palmer—

"Through the loose cork came the tell-tale odor of bitter almonds."

And in "The Sinister Death in the Black Room" by Henry LaCossitt—

"And in his nostrils was a curious pungency, a bitter-sweet odor, like that of sweet almonds."

All I can say is, make up your mind—is it bitter or sweet? Or is it just plain nuts to you?

Arthur R. Tofte

THANK YOU!

SAN LEANDRO, CAL.—I have been reading MYSTERY MAGAZINE for over a year now, and wish to tell you that I think each new number surpasses the preceding one.

I always enjoy your book-length novels, and I don't believe that I have ever read any story at any time that can beat "Going to St. Ives," and would like to have more of Colver Harris' stories. "Murder on the Fast Express" is all that one could wish for in a mystery.

I am glad that you have changed the picture for "I Go Sleuthing." The other always gave me the shivers, but this new one is the ticket.

I wish to send my sincerest thanks for this splendid magazine—the maximum in reading for the minimum in price.

Mrs. L. Campbell

RIGHT IN THE TEETH AGAIN!

BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON—I see we have a contortionist in Colver Harris' story, "Going to St. Ives." Mrs. Harris states in the first two paragraphs of Chapter II, that our heroine on awakening from a faint "stared upward into the great vaulted ceiling of St. Ives." This is done, "stretched prone upon a pew in the great Cathedral." According to Noah Webster, I.L.D., the definition of prone is: "lying with the face downwards."

Since I bought my first copy of MYSTERY, a year and a half ago, I have noticed a great improvement in the magazine. I am more than pleased to see that "The Rogue's Almanac" has been eliminated and replaced by more interesting reading.

How a magazine publishing stories by such authors as Sax Rohmer, Mignon G. Eberhart, Ellery Queen, Carl Mattison Chapin and Walter F. Ripperger can sell for ten cents is beyond my humble comprehension.

I, as many others of your readers, would greatly enjoy a book-length novel by Mignon G. Eberhart starring Nurse Keate.

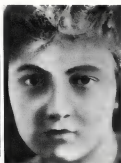
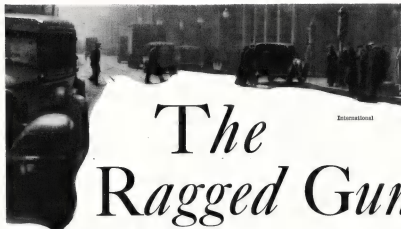
Thanking you for the world's greatest value for a thin dime.

J. G. Nelson

WELL! WELL!

NEWFOUNDLAND, N. J.—I feel that it is just and right for the readers of a worthy magazine to show their appreciation of the editor's efforts to give them only the best. So I am going to speak "right out in meeting" about it. (Please turn to page 106)

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page! The Terrible Affair on Halstead Street!



Picture of Wanderer's wife, and a view of Halstead Street in Chicago.

The Ragged Gunman

A TALL young fellow of nondescript appearance shuffled across North Campbell Street, Chicago, toward Carl Wanderer, former Army Lieutenant, and his pretty wife, Ruth, as they approached their home on the night of June 20, 1920.

He was a ragged individual. The khaki Army shirt he wore was open at the throat. The trousers of his soiled and shabby suit were torn at one knee.

He followed the couple as they turned in at their two-family dwelling; followed them up the steps and into the darkened vestibule. In its murky gloom, he spoke for the first time. His words were a mumble. Wanderer held back. His wife went ahead.

"I'll switch on the light," she announced evenly.

Wanderer cautioned her not to. His words were followed by a burst of profanity, then a shot. Then, almost instantly, a fusillade. Ten bullets plastered across the narrow strip of hallway. Wanderer had his automatic out and was giving battle.

A bullet pierced his wife's knee; another struck her just below the heart.

When the police arrived they found Wanderer a-straddle the bleeding form of the ragamuffin, frenziedly hammering him with his fists.

"The rat! The rat!" he screamed over and over. "He shot Ruth, but I killed him. I killed him!"

On the floor of the vestibule were two Colt .45 automatics. Seven bullets had been fired from one. It bore the manufacturer's number C-2282. Three bullets had been fired from the other, which was marked with the initials "L. H. B." and the inscription, "property of the U. S. Army." Wanderer identified the latter revolver as his own.

To Chicago, the young husband was a hero for so bravely and promptly avenging the murder of his pretty young wife. Formality demanded that a Coroner's inquest be held, and then and there the case would have been closed had not the police asked for a continuation. They wanted to identify the ragged gunman, if possible.

What little chance of finding out who he was apparently lay in tracing the Colt automatic, C-2282.

From the Colt Company came a dry-as-dust communication, advising that the revolver had originally been shipped to a Chicago sporting goods house. There was no hint of drama in the wording, but there was drama in the offering.

For when the police checked the gun further they found that it had come into Carl Wanderer's possession two days before his wife was slain.

Wanderer denied all this and, although the grilling

dragged on into the wee small hours of the morning, he continued to deny it. And then a detective, who had found one aspect of the case very puzzling to him, spoke up.

"Ten shots were fired," he told the young widower. "Three of them by the gun you say you had, seven by the other gun. Now that vestibule isn't very large. You were between your wife and the bandit. Doesn't it seem strange to you that you escaped injury with so many shots fired at you in such a narrow space?"

Wanderer shrugged, attempted no explanation, but changed his story. Before the thin streaks of dawn appeared in the East he had given detectives seventeen versions of the shooting, each one different, yet each one possible.

And then, weakened and exhausted, he advanced still another version. This time it was the true one.

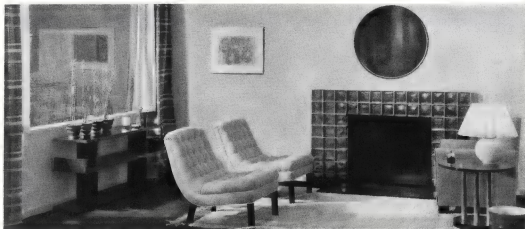
"I murdered my wife," he announced. His voice showed no emotion. "I shot her to death in cold blood. Why? Here's why! I hated married life. I wanted to get back into the Army. I killed that bum, too. I had both guns."

Slowly, calmly, he told his amazing story.

Down in the vicinity of Madison and Halstead Streets, where bums and tramps congregate, he had found the man to play the role of "ragged stranger," as the newspapers were to refer to him. He had taken him into a speakeasy, bought him several drinks and offered him a job. The man accepted. He needed one badly. Wanderer gave him carfare and told him to go out to North Campbell Street that night and wait for him. When he came along, the tramp was to follow him into the house and ask for money, which Wanderer promised to give him.

It all worked out as he had planned it. With the two automatics in his pockets, he took his wife to the movies. On their way home they met the tramp. He followed them into the vestibule and asked for money. Then it was that Wanderer, standing between his wife and the "ragged stranger," drew both guns and fired in both directions. It was dark in the hallway, difficult for either his wife or the tramp to see what he was doing, but it didn't make any difference whether they saw or not. Both were marked for death. They would never be able to tell.

It was a diabolical, fiendish crime, and Wanderer swung from the gallows for it. As for the "ragged stranger," his identity is still an enigma. Three times women came forward and identified him and three times their identifications proved to be false.



Courtesy of Abraham & Straus

This fireside grouping done in the semi-modern manner has all the sturdy simplicity of the more extreme modernistic design with a greater feeling of warmth and grace.

At the August Furniture Sales

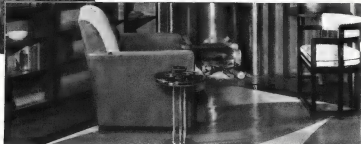
Semi-modern furniture is now on display at the stores. It's smart, conservative, durable and not too expensive for a modest purse

By BETTY LENAHAN

Photographs courtesy of L. Bamberger & Co.



Right, two of the new chairs built for comfort, durability, beauty and lasting satisfaction.



THEY call them semi-modern—these new chairs and tables, sofas, desks and bookcases—that will be pointed out as the latest thing at the August furniture sales. They retain all the sturdy simplicity of the more extreme modernistic designs with something more to offer in the way of grace and comfort.

So if you have ever wanted to go modern, but have never quite made up your mind to take the drastic step, now's the time. And if you are starting from scratch with a small house or apartment you may very well decide in favor of furniture of this type. It will satisfy your own yearning to be up-to-date without striking your more conservative friends and relatives as being a bit extreme or revolutionary.

It is sturdy man-size furniture—no doubt of that—but it is very definitely designed with one eye toward beauty and the other to usefulness in the not so large house or apartment. The simplicity of design and coloring make it possible to assemble in fairly small quarters all the pieces that you will need.

Now really is the time, during these August furniture sales, to buy the furniture you need or can afford. But just because this new semi-modern furniture is the big news of the season, don't feel that it is the only worth-while selection. If you have already started out in your quest for a Colonial atmosphere for your home keep it up and let the opportunities to buy good furniture at a reasonable price bring you nearer your original goal. Various sorts of Colonial furniture as well as English and Spanish types are, and will continue to be, valued for their beauty of design.

Left, a group of reasonably priced semi-modern furniture suitable for the small living room or combination bedroom-living room.

Stained Rubies

(Continued from
page 49)

man, and we're friends, and—yes, you were right in your guess. But why on earth should I tell you my troubles, things that are a deep, personal part of myself? I never saw you before this evening. If your interest is merely a form of impertinent curiosity—

"Oh, for the love of heaven don't be talking reason!" exclaimed Riley Dillon in sudden dismay. "Did you ever know a reasonable Irishman? Why, reason's the deadliest enemy of faith; if I dear! Come, believe in miracles; if I hadn't felt the urge to help you, I wouldn't be asking questions."

Another laugh, and her fingers tightened a little on his arm.

"You can't possibly help. No outsider could."

"Very likely. It's not as an outsider that I'm offering."

"Robert and I used to be very close. Mother died after he was born, and Father holds it against him unjustly," said her quiet voice. Dillon understood now that she was confiding in him. "I've mothered him always, whenever I could, but now—oh, it's no secret after all! He's been drinking, gambling, wasting; the old story of too much money for his own good. He resents Father's authority."

"And your father isn't the man to be resented with success."

"Exactly. So you see what's behind the glitter and laughter tonight. Robert got home barely in time for the party, hardly sober; they had a fearful row. Father's going to have it out with him, there in the sanctum. They may be at it now," and she indicated the bow windows of the famous room, just ahead of them.

"A row might do the boy good," Dillon observed thoughtfully. "In some ways your father is a bitter hard man. I suppose you know the story of the Malabar rubies?"

"Oh, of course! They were presented to him by—"

"Yes, yes, I know all that, my dear; but the real story is different! They belonged to a poor devil of a Russian prince, who got them out of Russia after the revolution. Well, one day he was found murdered, and all his jewels had vanished."

"LATER, much later, they turned up as part of the crown treasure in a certain country. Mind you, I don't say that the rascally prime minister, or the unspeakable scoundrel of a king, knew anything about the murder of the poor devil! At all events, they had collared the loot on some plausible pretext. After your father saved their state from ruin, they gave him the rubies. They could well afford the gift. It was cheap."

She frowned slightly. "Do you suggest that Father has no right to the rubies?"

"Faith!" and Dillon laughed gaily. "Who has any right to such jewels, except the right of possession? Well, now, about this brother of yours, my dear."

"There's nothing you can do."

"But there is," said Dillon quickly. "What, then?"

Riley Dillon had not the faintest idea, but his laugh was gay and confident.

"Must I be always explaining in black and white? Leave the matter to me. I promise you I'll give him a bit of help, maybe straighten things out."

"Ah!" She looked at him and

smiled. "Whatever you do will be well done, I know; and I'll thank you for my heart. Shall we go in now? I'll be missed."

Dillon patted her hand and ushered her into the house by the side entrance. He had made a promise and he meant to keep it—somehow.

At the foot of the great staircase they encountered the butler, and Dillon asked for the general.

"I believe he's in the sanctum, sir, with Mr. Robert."

"Then don't disturb him," Dillon said, and led Anne Nichols upstairs.

Another dance, and still another. Then Riley Dillon, reluctantly yielding his partner to the massed insistence of other guests, caught sight of Robert Nichols returning to the dance floor. The young man was agitated, with spots of angry color flaring in his cheeks, and Dillon whistled softly to himself.

"A hot battle with the old fella, eh? Then, ten to one, the sanctum is empty and I'll never have a better moment!"

THOUGHT of the Malabar rubies rushed into his mind. Everything else was driven out. He forgot Anne Nichols; rather, she lessened than grew on him. Yes, if the place were empty, this was the time of all others to act! He quietly disappeared by the rear stairs.

Upon gaining the lower hall, he found it empty, and so he gained the door of the famed sanctum, unobserved by anyone. To his hand, the door swung open, and the room showed empty to his quick glance. He slipped inside and closed the door again.

His gray eyes flashed around. The air was filled with music from the ball-room on the third floor. Two of the windows—which were French doors—stood wide open. Outside the screens showed a balcony with a white marble rail, three feet above the ground level. No one on the balcony. It was his chance.

He examined the room in a swift glance that saw everything. It was a bizarre place. The center of the floor was occupied by a hideous roll-top desk. The walls were adorned with books, pictures, framed letters, old weapons. To the right of the windows was a tall Coromandel screen, an immense affair of a dozen garish lacquer panels.

Near this screen, but standing in front of the bookshelves was a long and narrow table. The top of the table was a cabinet in sections, under heavy glass, like a showcase; and, in effect, this was exactly what the table was. Securely locked within it and on display were the diplomats, medals, honoraries and decorations bestowed upon General Nichols by grateful governments. In the center section reposed the Malabar rubies—ah!

Suddenly Dillon's pulses leaped. The glass top of this section had been smashed by a massive lump of carved jade, whose teakwood pedestal stood upon the desk. The jade lump now lay in the case, among jewels and glass flinders. Beside it, in a case of spotless white morocco and satin, glimmered the rubies. Riley Dillon stared at them.

In the quarrel between father and son, no doubt, the case had been smashed. Here, then, were the Mala-

bar rubies for the taking! Their deep, rich red made his heart pound. Here they lay, all twenty of them, graduated but never set, from the central Orloff ruby to the perfectly matched stones on either side. They were not large, but were of the finest and rarest quality, richest blood frozen into stone.

Through the broken glass top, Riley Dillon reached his silk-gloved fingers and picked them out, one by one, dropping them in his left palm. He lifted his head abruptly, sniffing the air. Had the thought of blood charmed his senses? No; his alert nostrils caught the odor again, more distinctly, beyond mistake. He searched the floor and saw it. There, coming from beneath the carved edge of the tall screen. A crimson thread, that widened and spread even as he looked at it.

Swiftly he stepped forward and moved out to the corner panel of the screen. General Nichols lay face up, eyes staring—dead. A wound in the side of his head, near the temple, was draining blood. Dillon stooped. The body was still warm, but life had fled.

The rubies clasped in his hand, Dillon rose and darted to the door; he looked it, to forestall any intrusion. Then he looked around, brain racing.

In a flash, everything was changed for him. To take the stones now was out of the question. Riley Dillon never ran needless risk, and here were all sorts of possibilities. No; he must get rid of them, and yet leave them available—ah! The very thing! On the desk was a small brass bowl half filled with ashes and cigar ends. A step, and he scooped aside the ashes. Dropping in the rubies, he covered them over. So far, so good. If anything went amiss, they would not be found on him.

Who had done this thing? The answer was obvious, and the shock of it gripped Dillon strangely. Parrride! Though well aware of the danger in delay, Dillon lingered. He could not get away from the first horror of so unnatural a crime. The boy was wrecked for life, then.

STEPPING back to the cabinet, Riley Dillon looked at the lump of jade matrix. He frowned, reached one finger down, and touched an odd smear on the jade. He looked at the white silk of his glove and sniffed it. Oil or grease—singular! The killer had caught up this lump of jade, striking the older man, killing him instantly. Then the jade lump fell here upon the cabinet. It was all obvious enough, except the smear of grease. Or was it?

With great care, Dillon reached into the cabinet, sweeping the decorations and other objects into confusion. Thus, the rubies would not be missed at once. He straightened up, frowning, puzzled. The jade lump could not have been hurled at Nichols, for so it must have crushed the skull. Only a glancing blow would have struck on the temple, making such a sharp cutting wound. No, nothing deliberate here. A frozzied, uncalculated blow in the heat of fear or passion.

"Faith, the lad's done for," Dillon thought. "And I promised Anne—"

Something caught his eye, and he dropped to one knee. A mark against the light brown wool of the camel hair

(Please turn to page 56)

*If you think it impossible for
a person sitting next to you
to be killed without your
knowing it, read this short
story of—*



The Matinee Murder

"ONE, please."

The man returned the cashier's pleasant smile, passed the box-office, crossed through the spacious outer lobby, and entered the theater.

A roar of racing automobiles greeted his ears as he came into the darkened auditorium and lowered himself to a seat on the aisle. On the screen, speedy cars were hurtling wildly around a dusty track, and though he knew nothing about the story, the action gripped his attention instantly. So much so, in fact, that he became annoyed at a growing pressure against his shoulder.

His side glance showed him that the man in the seat beside him was evidently dozing, slipping sideways in his chair, leaning more and more against the supporting shoulder next to him.

"I say, there, wake up," he whispered, then shook the recumbent figure gently, even as he wondered how any one could fall asleep during so exciting a picture.

The slumbering man made no response, only seemed to slip a little further, and as the first patron seized his arm in a firmer grip to shake him again, something about the strange limpness brought a sudden, eerie

By

CELIA
KEEGAN

prickling of the scalp. He looked around—an usher was just passing up the aisle.

"Boy!" he called in a low whisper. "Yes, sir?" The usher paused beside him.

"This man seems to be ill. I think he's fainted." He indicated the limp form now leaning fully against him.

"I'll call another usher and we'll

help him out. Thank you, sir."

THE ushers had no sooner assisted the unconscious man into the brighter lobby, carrying his sagging form between them, than they looked at one another with distended eyes.

"He looks bad to me," said one.

"He acts as though he were dead!" the other answered in a hushed whisper. "Help me get him downstairs, and then you better call Mr. Kingsley."

The manager was with them in a few moments, his face mirroring the worry of the two boys, as he bent over the form of the man where the ushers had placed him.

"I'm afraid you're right, Joe," he said to the usher who had told him that the (Please turn to page 82)



"I say, there, wake up," he whispered. The slumbering man only slid further down in his seat. Something about his strange limpness brought a sudden, eerie prickling to his neighbor's scalp.



PETTICOATS AGAIN



THE CLIPPER SCIONCE



BILLIONS OF CANS



FRESH AIR REVIEW

NEWS OF THE NEW

PETTICOATS are here again, or rather they are waiting round the corner to slip in upon us if, in a frivolous or unguarded moment, we give them the slightest encouragement. Paris dressmakers—notably Worth—have been making them to wear with evening dresses. American women have taken kindly to the fashion, and you can even buy ready-made long, slinky petticoats of taffeta, organdy or other sheer fabrics, with frills and ruffles at the flaring hemline. But you cannot say that petticoats are part of the mode of 1934 as long as they are worn only with formal evening dress by a very small minority of womankind.

There really will be a petticoat revival worth talking about when, and if, we wear them under the usual sort of afternoon and evening dresses, when gay young girls in their teens consider a ruffled petticoat as quite indispensable to a party costume and when taffeta petticoats are worn as they once were under the tailored street suit or street dress. Rustling taffeta petticoats actually have been seen and heard under tailored suits in Paris. The suit is of a dark or neutral tone, navy blue, beige, gray or black, and the petticoat with pinked ruffles at the hemline is of a bright color to match the scarf and other accessories. A rose pink or hyacinth blue taffeta petticoat can give new glamour to a simply made black satin dress.

NOW that everything from soup to nuts comes to us perfectly sealed in tin cans it is easy to believe that quite a few tons of tin are used in the course of a year to make the cans. The fact is—as the latest figures show—that to supply American tin can production, 20,000 tons of tin are used a year. Iron ore is needed to make the pig iron for steel ingots needed for the tin plate. Coal is needed to make the coke to make the pig iron and to supply heat and power for refining processes, and limestone is needed for flux in the blast furnaces. All of these minerals needed to make tin cans amount to some eight million tons of minerals—in addition to the twenty thousand tons of tin.

The yield in tin plate from this mountain of minerals amounts to 1,150,000 tons or enough to cover a surface of five billion square feet.

Figures like this should be of interest to all of us who make daily use of canned foods, but even more important is the assurance that along with the widespread use of the tin can container there has been a constant effort to make it an ideal food container. The materials used must be absolutely harmless to quality or flavor of the food, the can must be air tight so that the food will not deteriorate, the can must conduct heat rapidly so that the contents may be heated and cooled quickly, it must be light so as not to add materially to the cost of transportation, it must be strong enough to stand rough handling

and—last but not least—it must be inexpensive enough so that canned foods will be an economical addition to our food supplies. It is only because the present day tin can actually does come up to this high standard of perfection that canned foods have the important place in the American bill of fare that they now occupy.

WE speak and think of lighting fixtures as if they really were fixtures—something definitely attached to our rooms to be part of our background until we move into a new house or have the old one completely done over. If we rent a house or apartment with fixtures that do not go with our furnishings we feel that we must just take them as we find them or look for another place to live, not realizing that new fixtures of the sort we like, and that will really contribute to the charm and beauty of the room, are often quite inexpensive and are little more difficult to set up than new hangings for a window or a new cover for a chair. If you cannot adjust the new fixtures yourself you can get an expert to do it for you at very small cost.

The right idea is to think of electric lighting accessories, even when they are solidly fastened on the wall, as movables rather than fixtures. And there is no good excuse for having them strike a discordant note. Because you have chosen to furnish a room in the Colonial style is certainly no reason why you should light your rooms with candles and rush lights, but you should avoid fixtures of too modern design. Thoroughly up-to-date in application but of genuinely old-fashioned design is a new clipper ship scionce that takes its inspiration from the old whaling ports of Massachusetts. The sea-green glass backplate is a faithful copy of an old whaling lantern, the scalloped brass frame is typical of the work of early seamen on their long voyages and the Yankee clipper ship on the top of the scionce is a copy of an old time ship.

VACATION days are here again but there are thousands of bright youngsters who, for one reason or another, must spend some of their holiday time with their text books. If failure to pass one or two difficult subjects is all that holds a child from going on with his class there is every reason why he should be encouraged to make up the work in Summer. In some towns and cities there are summer school classes where needed instruction can be obtained. More often the task falls to parents or older sisters and brothers. But helping any youngster to regain his status in his school community is always worth while and to a child in normal health summer studying can do no harm. Not infrequently the child who has made little or no progress in the close confinement of a crowded school room shows exceptional alertness when he can do his work out of doors.



In the Orient, housewives still have an opportunity to haggle over everything they have to buy.



In Europe you still have the chance to play the game of barter—with excellent chance of losing.



Say THANK YOU to the Grocery Man

Once retail dealers had to be sharp and housewives had to haggle—but the modern salesman is a real friend and deserves your gratitude

SHOPPING used to be an exciting game. If the housewife were of a pugnacious disposition she rather enjoyed it—set her jaws and went forth to haggle and barter. Even if the grocer were her next door neighbor's husband, she was on her guard. She wouldn't have considered him a good business man if he hadn't tried to get the best of her over each purchase. If she were a really experienced housewife she felt perfectly capable of getting the better end of the bargain more than half the time.

It was part of the every-day game to sniff of the butter to see that it was fresh, to pinch the vegetables and prod the meat and insist on having the berries and other small fruit turned out of the baskets to see that there wasn't paper padding or inferior fruit at the bottom. To make sure that she wasn't getting short weight she kept a pair of scales in her own kitchen.

But all that was no particular reflection on the character of the old-time grocer. Because often the only way he could make any kind of profit was by means of clever barter. It was a game at which he and the housewife played with equal chance of winning.

When you visit Europe or the Orient, you may still

have a chance to play at this thrilling game. But in this country the excitement of barter has practically disappeared. The most important factors in bringing this change about are:

Uniform prices.

Government regulation of weights and measures.

Government regulation of labels.

The use of trademarks and standardized containers.

Because of this, the modern American housewife goes to do her marketing without considering the possibility of paying less for what she buys than her neighbor. She has the assurance that she will receive full measure of what she pays for. By taking time to examine the labels on the packages of the food she buys, she can inform herself as to the grade and quality of the product. Once she has found a certain brand of goods satisfactory she has every reasonable assurance of being able to obtain goods of the same quality whenever she wants it. Even fruits and vegetables nowadays are offered to her under the protection of a jealously guarded trade name. Lettuce, cabbages, spinach, tomatoes and other vegetables that were once sold by the piece or measured by the pint or quart are more and more being sold by the pound.

A grocer's cooperation, courtesy, knowledge of his products and an understanding of the housewife's needs take the place today of old-time barter. These are the traits the modern grocer uses to hold his customers. If you avail yourself of his expert knowledge of his wares, you will have a real and sincere ally, ready to be of service at all times.

Stained Rubies

(Continued from
page 57)

rug—no, a bit of dirt! Dillon poked at it, crumbled it between his fingers. It was garden soil, still damp and cold.

With a sharp exclamation he rose and went to the windows, scrutinizing the swinging screen doors. These were enameled white. Again a slight smear, like that on the jade lump; again it was oil or grease, still fresh!

"I begin to think I've missed my calling," he murmured. "But one can't be sure of such evidence; that's the devil of it! When a man has just killed another man, he loses his head; the world is changed for him. That is, unless he's a born killer, which is rare. Him! He shoved open the screen—"

He reached out casually as though to open the screen. His hand touched it, a good four inches above the slight smear. Dillon stood a full six feet. The murderer, then, was probably not over five feet eight. But—the faint oily smear! What was it?

He unlocked the door again, crossed to the window, and stepped out upon the balcony. The marble balustrade was too high to leap easily. Daring much, he struck a match and held it close to the white marble. Yes! There on the top was another slight smear, where a man had rested his hand to vault over. But there were no finger prints. Only the trace of oil, which sticks long to leather. Gloves, then!

Looking down, Dillon eyed the gravel walk below. From one side he made a careful vault and landed in the gravel, leaving no traces. Another match, and he knelt. Ah! It was clear enough now. There at the edge of the gravel, a shoe had gone deeply into the dirt; a small shoe, about an eight. And here on one side—

WITH a leap of his pulses. Riley Dillon picked up a cigaret stub. A straw-tipped cigaret, suddenly dropped and allowed to burn out to the edge of the straw tip. Dillon tossed away his match, rose, stood reconstructing what must have taken place. Then a sudden incisive voice burst from the room behind and above.

"He must be here somewhere—good God, man! Look! Behind the screen!"

Riley Dillon whipped around and followed the gravel path, swiftly. It brought him to the rear of the house. There ahead of him the drive was packed full of cars, lights were blazing at the garage. Chauffeurs were chatting in groups or lolling in their cars. As he approached one of the groups, Dillon noted that the ballroom music had come to an abrupt cessation. The murder was no longer a secret.

"Evening," said Dillon, with his cheery nod and smile. "A little while ago, up at the house, I was talking with one of you boys. I want to find him again, but don't know his name. He was about five feet eight, smoked straw-tipped cigaresses, and had greasy gloves—"

"You mean Shorty Abbot, sure," spoke up one of the chauffeurs. "He's over there by the garage with that Fiat. He's been cleaning out his car-buretor—he was arguing a while ago about this high-test gas adjustment."

With a word of thanks, Riley Dillon continued his way.

Above the open doors of the garage was a floodlight, and within its circle of radiance was drawn up a Fiat. Ten

or twelve feet away, at one side, two chauffeurs stood smoking and talking. The hood of the Fiat was up, and a small man in whipcord uniform was working at the engine and cursing in violent tones. He was a wizened man, sharp in the face, and he gave Riley Dillon a nervous glance of inquiry.

"You're Abbot, I think? I'd like to see you for a moment."

"Yes?" responded Abbot without interest, and went on working.

"They've just discovered it," and Dillon, with a glance at the house, lowered his voice. "You know, while you were waiting outside the windows, until the general and his son had finished their quarrel—"

Abbot straightened up. "What you talking about, anyhow?"

"You," said Riley Dillon calmly. "You shouldn't have smoked that cigaret while you were waiting; it was bad luck. And those gloves of yours left worse than fingerprints. They left smears on the jade lump, on the doors, and elsewhere. And the marks of your gloves, you know, can be identified."

Riley Dillon spoke quietly, carefully, so that the two men at one side would not catch his words. After all, he was taking a gamble. One could be sure, with such evidence—

Abbot moved like a flash. Dillon saw the blow coming, too late to evade it. The monkey-wrench caught him over the head. He went staggering backward.

One wild, gasping cry broke from Abbot, who leaped to his car and reached inside. In the white flood of light his face was frantic, convulsed, terror to witness a pistol leaped out in his hand as he whirled about.

"I killed him—but you won't get me!" he screamed furiously. "I been seeing him strut around long enough, the blasted millionaire, while his damned bank crash wiped out everything we had! Didn't hurt him none, but it ruined me, cleaned him all! I went in there and told him a few things. I didn't go to hurt him till he started for me, then I grabbed that stone and let him have it. Served the old thief right—thief, that's what he was! Getting rich on poor folks' money—get back, there! Damn you, back up—"

CHAUFFEURS had come running, crowding in. They backed hastily as Abbot flourished the pistol at them. He was frantic.

"Put that gun down!" snapped Dillon.

"Yes, you'd like to get me in your jail, but you won't—"

There was the sharp, bursting explosion of a shot.

Riley Dillon strode into the house. If he was appalled by the grim finale of his experiment with Shorty Abbot, his chill gray eyes gave no sign of it.

Everything here was in confusion. Guests were leaving or milling about the house. Working his way through the mass, Dillon came to the door of the sanetum. One of the traffic officers who had been stationed outside the mansion for the evening, stood on guard here.

"You can't come in," he barked at Dillon. "The chief's here himself and—"

"So much the better," said Dillon, and throwing open the door, strode in. He came upon a poignant scene. At

the desk was seated the chief of police, in evening attire; he had been one of the guests. Another officer held Robert Nichols. At one side, Anne and her sister clung together in frantic grief and dismay.

"Nichols, those rubies are gone," the police chief was saying. "Nobody's been here but you. And you admit you quarreled with him—"

"What of it?" cried out the young man, desperate and defiant. Then the chief swung angrily about, as Riley Dillon stepped forward.

"Well, who let you in? What do you want here?"

"You, obviously," drawled Dillon. "If you happen to be looking for the murderer of General Nichols, he's out by the garage. Crazy by a bank failure. He's been screaming out a confession and ended up by shooting himself—"

NEXT moment, only the two girls and Riley Dillon were left in the room. The younger sister, sobbing, sank into a chair. Anne came up to Dillon.

"What does it mean?" Her gaze searched his face. "You had something to do with it! They were just accusing him—"

"Sure, I know all about it, my dear; please be, it's all right now," and Riley Dillon's warm smile leaped out, as he patted her shoulder. "I had to be keeping my promise to you, didn't I—even if it was in a way I hadn't expected? Will you be taking your sister off to bed before she has hysterics?"

She nodded, and looked at him.

"And when shall I see you again, please?"

Dillon read singular things in her gaze, found more singular echoes in his heart. There was a choice before him, a choice that brooked no hesitation or delay. He made it in the fraction of a second.

"Next week, when I get back from Florida. You see, I'm leaving on business in the morning, my dear," he lied, very gallantly.

So she was gone, an arm about her sister; the door closed behind them.

Riley Dillon glanced at the little brass bowl on the desk, and drew a deep breath. Yes, he had made his choice. It was not too late, however, if he would change his mind. Even now, it was not too late—

With a shrug, he leaned forward and dipped his fingers in the ashes.

Ten minutes later, Riley Dillon got his hat and stick and worked his way out of the house. Police were searching the garden with flashlights, for undoubtedly the murderer had lost or thrown away the Malabar rubies. Guests were leaving, an ambulance and more police cars were clanging up.

Riley Dillon smiled cheerfully at the scene. There was a sore spot on his head, but he forgot that as he patted the slight bulge in his waistcoat pocket.

"Devil take it, I've earned them!" he reflected cheerfully. "I'll wager that poor dear devil of a Russian prince is chuckling from his seat in Paradise, this very minute! And small blame to him. I'm chuckling my own self. Only only—"

Only—! A sigh fluttered on his lips as he thought of the dark lovely eyes to which he had bidden farewell forever. Riley Dillon had his own code.

SURPRISING COLORS HIDDEN IN HUMAN SKIN PRODUCE

Remarkable Change in Powder Shades



OPTICAL MACHINE FINDS
Bright Blue IN BLONDE SKIN
Grass Green IN BRUNETTE
NEW SHADES GIVE "LIFE" TO ALL SKINS...

(from left) Mrs. William T. Wetmore uses Brunette. Miss Charlotte Young and Mrs. Hal Fitzhugh Lee use Pond's Rose Cream.

DO YOU KNOW that there is now a face powder that actually contains the hidden colors in human skin?

A delicate machine has made this possible!

A machine that discovered bright blue in blonde skin... vivid green in brunette. Hidden shades that give transparency to blonde skin... creamy charm to brunette.

Pond's tested over two hundred girls' skins with this scientific machine. Dazzling complexions to wan, dull skins... we tested every one.

New shades fresher skin

From all of this study we evolved the six perfect powder shades that will enhance—enliven—any coloring.

NATURAL...perfect for very fair blondes.

Brightens the face... ROSE CREAM is for most blondes and for fair-skinned brunettes. Adds fresh luminous quality to the skin.

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ROSE BRUNETTE, a warmer shade... gives sparkle to sallowne skins and tones down ruddiness... DARK BRUNETTE is for brunettes of pronounced coloring. And for sun-tanned skins.

And Pond's—in these heavenly new shades—spreads with such marvelous smoothness that you stay powdered all day long. The perfume is very French—very expensive! Yet Pond's is amazingly reasonably priced. A glass jar for only



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★ Send 5¢ for Two Special Boxes of Pond's Face Powder and an extra sample... three different Light or three different Dark Shades, with directions for choosing your shade.

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 I enclose 5¢ (to cover cost of postage and packing) for Two Special Boxes of Pond's new Face Powder and an extra sample—three different shades in all.

I prefer 3 different Light Shades ☐ I prefer 3 different Dark Shades ☐

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Street.....

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NATURAL

ROSE CREAM

LIGHT CREAM

BRUNETTE

ROSE BRUNETTE

DARK BRUNETTE

A FACT!

SCIENCE ADVANCES NEW DATA THAT MAY COMPLETELY
CHANGE YOUR IDEAS OF CIGARETTES!

YOUR ENERGY VARIES DURING THE DAY



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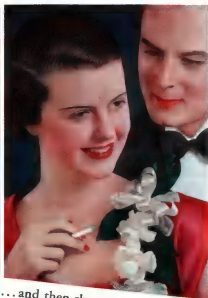
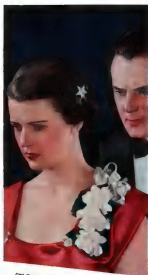
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EFFECT IS NATURAL

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TOO TIRED FOR FUN...and then she smoked a Camel!



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"Get a LIFT with a Camel!"

Are You Responsible for Dillinger?

(Continued from page 26)

Dillingers set a good table. There was an abundance of rich, nourishing food. The father saw that the boy had plenty of warm clothes and shoes to protect his frame from the rigors of the Indiana snows, which are as severe in Winter as the breezes that blow in Summer are gentle. John's sister was fifteen years older than he—a significant fact that we shall do well to remember. To the boy this sister was passionately devoted. Her name was Audrey and it was she who took over the mother role until her widower father took unto himself a new wife.

At the proper age the boy was sent to school with the other little boys and girls. On Sunday he went to Sunday school and church. His father said that is understandable—his father escorted him.

Believing in discipline and a certain orderliness, John's father mapped out a definite schedule for him. He went to bed by the clock and got up by the clock. It was his father's wish to instill in him the knowledge that life, like a farm or a department store, must be lived in a systematic way.

John, Jr., showed little liking for such tactics. Naturally self-indulgent, he wanted to do things his own way.

Speaking today through his tried patience, the No. 1 outlaw's father says he guesses he was too easy with the boy. He wanted to raise his children by the Golden Rule, and if he spoiled his boy by sparing the rod, it was because he tried to do with kindness what might have been achieved by sterner measures.

THE church to which the Dillingers belonged was the Hillside Avenue Christian Church, or the Disciples of Christ, a sect that greatly outnumbered contemporary groups in the Middle West.

The pastor of that church was the Rev. Charles M. Fillmore or Brother Fillmore, as he was called by the members of his congregation. From 1908 to 1918 he was there, and thus he came to know John Dillinger when John was only four years old.

At the outset of the Reverend Fillmore's pastorate he conducted a revival meeting, and that meeting a tall, spare man, with a child in his arms, strode down the aisle and entered the faith. It was the Elder Dillinger, keeping faith with the dead mother of his children.

The other children of the locality went to the same church and the same school. They fraternized at recess and in vacation period. You could not have told one from the other in those carefree days of adolescence—by looking at them. From this environment they sprang into lives of usefulness and respectability. They became law-abiding citizens, married, had children, and are rearing them to do the same.

But John Dillinger emerged a criminal. He had the same opportunity his colleagues enjoyed. But he broke faith at every turn. One night he went to church and became converted. He walked down and placed his hand in that of the Rev. Homer Dale, who had succeeded Brother Fillmore, and said, "I believe. I accept Jesus Christ and his teachings. I will look to God for strength and inspiration."

Having acknowledged his Creator,

his next act was to betray Him—just as he has betrayed everything and everyone with whom he has ever come in contact.

Looking John Dillinger in the eye does not yield the key to him. Heredity, as we have seen, is not to blame. Nor is environment insofar as we are able to ascertain.

In school he was hopeless. He lied and cheated and played hooky. When, at the end of the month, it came time to take his report card home for his father's signature, he resorted to such subterfuges as forging the elder Dillinger's name, or changing the grades. These ruses were as transparent as window panes. The teacher, and the father, saw through them. They talked and pleaded and argued, but it was so much wasted breath. It made no impression on the conscience of the future killer. Unhesitatingly he would promise to be a better boy—and go right along in his same old ways.

WE have followed to a certain extent the adolescent phase of Dillinger's life. Now see how quickly the milestones fly by when one foot is set upon the road to ruin.

In 1918, when John was fourteen years old, the Reverend Dale arrived and inaugurated a series of the old-time revivals. Under the spell of the minister's eloquence the recalcitrant almost flew to the altar to accept salvation and be born anew. Within the week he was back in character, playing hooky, refusing to study, creating disturbances, proving himself generally undesirable.

During these days Dillinger had developed an eye for the ladies. He was girl crazy. With this new interest came an indisposition for further classroom activities. In spite of his father's pleadings, he quit school—one more evidence of lack of character.

He secured a position in a veneer factory near his father's store and held it less than six months. After that he became errand boy for the Indianapolis Board of Trade, which he relinquished after nearly four months, and then finally hit on something that seemed in his line.

Mechanically inclined, he got a job in a machinist's shop and exhibited a definite flair for the work. To everybody's astonishment he remained there more than a year, earning six and seven dollars a day with piece work.

Sure affluence soon had him dizzy and presently young Dillinger turned up in a second-hand Chevrolet. He began staying out until all hours, taking in the dances in neighboring towns, going on wild parties. Sometimes he showed up at dawn; sometimes not at all.

With growing concern Dillinger's father watched his boy. Perhaps, he soliloquized, he had been wrong in rearing his son in the city. After consulting with his second wife, whom he had married some time before, and Audrey, now a woman thirty-three years old, the father decided to move to the country—away from the bright lights of the city—to a farm, and its attendant wholesome atmosphere.

Because it was a change and something different, John showed a surprising enthusiasm for the new life. But this wore off after a brief while, and

the laggard gave further evidence of his instability by shirking his chores. Thereafter he devoted his time to hunting and fishing and playing amateur baseball with a small town Indiana team. He was surprisingly good.

It was during this phase of his existence, in 1922, to be exact, that Dillinger first ran afoul of the law. He stole an automobile one night and escorted a young lady to a dance in it. It was a new and "classy" looking job and enabled the now distinctly girl-conscious Dillinger to appear to good advantage.

Within an hour the theft was detected and duly reported. And in less than an hour after that John Dillinger was under arrest. The set the stage for the first of many breaks the law was to accord him, because the justice of the peace in a generous mood, changed the charge to disorderliness and gave him a suspended sentence.

But Dillinger was too thick-headed to be so easily put at this early escape, and emphasized his stupidity by turning to companions picked up in pool halls, men the very acquaintance of whom was a certificate to lawlessness.

And he fell in love. This was a severe case of puppy or calf love, which, for a few brief days, appears to have been reciprocated with zeal. They kept secret trysts, because the girl's social position forbade open association with one of John Dillinger's loose ways.

This affair came to an abrupt end when Dillinger, hearing the girl's father in his home, received a curt and emphatic dismissal. The girl was forbidden to speak to him, and thereafter she appeared at social affairs only under the strictest vigilance.

The frustrated avain tore his hair. He wrote letter after letter, but no answer came to assuage his jilted soul.

There have been a few indulgent acquaintances who advanced the belief that this disillusionment is the answer to Dillinger's waywardness, saying that it soured him on gentility, and that, perhaps, he might have become a decent citizen had the girl looked with more favor on his suit.

A more ridiculous assumption would be difficult to arrive at. He was already a liar and a thief who had been arrested and permitted to go free through the misplaced kindness of an officer of the law.

We have seen that a rotter he was in school, and a rotter he was, have watched him, tongue in cheek, accept salvation and then backslide at the first opportunity.

Now witness this next step, which is consistent with everything he had undertaken. He ran away and joined the Navy. It was his naive belief that sailors wore uniforms and were leisurely sailed about the world for the fun of it. When he did this he left home without one word of farewell to his father, sisters, or the stepmother he professed to adore. He merely vamoosed like a thief in the night.

Arriving back in Indianapolis, he enlisted for four years, waiting until he was on the Atlantic Coast before notifying his father of his whereabouts, and then doing that by postcard. He even told a lie when he enlisted, giving his age as twenty instead of nineteen.

(Please turn to page 60)

Are You Responsible for Dillinger?

(Continued from
page 59)

Once under colors, he was assigned to the U.S.S. Utah as a third-class seaman and sent to sea. Naturally he deserted. After quitting the ship and running out on his father on the farm one could not expect him to be true in the Navy. He stayed in the service about five months, having been twice locked up in the brig for going AWOL, before taking permanent French leave.

Boston was his port of betrayal. In December the U.S.S. Utah put into Boston Harbor and Dillinger went ashore for the usual leave. He did not come back. As a deserter the government set out after him, but when at last they caught up with him the Federal authorities were too late. The State of Indiana already had him under lock and key, serving a ten to twenty-year sentence in the Pendleton Reformatory, for robbery.

The deserter's activities leading up to his internment are enlightening. With a brazenness that is difficult to imagine, he returned to spring on his father's generosity. Instead of assisting with the work, however, he played baseball on the Martinsville, Indiana, nine, serving as catcher and coach.

Into his life there came one day a beautiful girl. It is said that B—H— was the prettiest girl the county had ever seen. Of course she had her faults. The competition was fierce, but B—H— fell in love with Renegade Dillinger, and so, flushed with the triumph of his conquest, he married her. The man who performed the ceremony was the Rev. Virgil Trevis, who, strangely enough, was a former convict. Even with a wife to provide for, you wouldn't expect Deserter Dillinger to go to work, would you? Right. He went to live on the bounty of his father, dividing the time between his own and his bride's parents. The usual bickering ensued and sprang on him found it more pleasant to lounge in the pool halls, where he met up with Ed Singleton, whose record already boasted of time served in Michigan City.

ONE night they decided to go after a little "easy cash." Well shot by booze, they went to the store of B. F. Morgan, a grocer in the town of Mooresville, and, in addition to giving him a severe beating, robbed him of \$550. Naturally the grocer recognized them and so within twenty-four hours both of them were under arrest.

At the suggestion of a lawyer, Deserter Dillinger pleaded guilty and was sentenced from ten to twenty years. Singleton, however, denied his guilt and got off with only two years. That's one for the books. Any way, here Dillinger was languishing in jail less than five months after being married. It is said that his wife visited him on several occasions at the reformatory, but what passed between them none can say. Anyway, in 1929, she sued for divorce on the grounds that he had been convicted of an infamous crime—and won it readily enough.

Later she became the wife of a respectable farmer.

But like a plague, the name of Dillinger has come to haunt her. Since Deserter Dillinger became Killer Dillinger, Public Enemy No. 1, this unfortunate woman has had to barricade her home against the inquisitive, even

going so far as to have the telephone disconnected. It is said she made one blaring statement concerning her former husband, and then presumably locked her lips on the subject forever. It was, "John Dillinger is dead to me!"

OUTLAW DILLINGER'S nine-year tenure behind bars was distinguished by two unsuccessful efforts to escape. For ill conduct during this period he was punished six different times. The records show that while an inmate he even broke into the commissary and stole everything to eat he could get his hands on.

He was, in fact, the last person in the work yard expected to be paroled.

But they paroled Outlaw Dillinger. The circumstances to that act are curious and they now bear a double interest, inasmuch as Dillinger has since been the cause of fifteen deaths, and that the parole, even as you read this, is threatening to unsettle Gov. McNut. The Governor of Indiana who signed the order.

What a lot of people want to know is why Dillinger's record in prison was not cited with the plea when it came up before the parole board.

What really happened is this. A petition was circulated through the county and signed, along with hundreds of others, by B. F. Morgan, whom Dillinger and Singleton robbed and assaulted, by the family minister, the trial judge, and even the prosecutor, pleading that Dillinger was urged to help his aging father tend the farm.

The State Commission of Clemency, according to the parole, "After careful investigation" of all facts in the case, then recommended Dillinger's release. Whereupon Governor McNutt signed the order, and the die was cast. A new grief came to perch on the elder Dillinger's shoulders. His second wife died. This was almost simultaneous with Deserter Dillinger's parole, and he was there for the funeral.

With outrageous insincerity he walked up to Brother Fillmore, who officiated at the services, and wrung his hand. There were false tears in his eyes. He looked the minister in the face and said, "I'm going straight this time. I've learned my lesson."

The echo of this remark had hardly died before Deserter Dillinger had robbed the Daleville, Indiana, bank of \$3,500. This accomplished, he descended on the National Bank of Montpelier, Indiana, and relieved it of \$12,000, and then shifted his field of operations to Ohio, where, with astonishing ease, he took three banks for \$82,000.

After that he decided to lay low for a spell, and so went into hiding at the home of Mrs. Mary Jenkins Longnaker, at Dayton, Ohio, the sister of an escaped Michigan City convict. Through a mysterious tip the police tracked him to this address and there captured him. Thereupon bank-robber Dillinger became "eel" Dillinger, making the first of his sensational escapes from the Allen County Jail, in Lima, where he had been taken.

In making this getaway he was assisted by his desperado companions, who shot and killed Sheriff Jess Sabor in effecting it.

And so the thief and the liar, the deserter and the renegade added the stigma of murderer to his name.

Then the gang—Dillinger's gang—really got going. They robbed and shot up banks coming and going. The State of Indiana was so terrorized that the state militia was called out. Meanwhile Killer Dillinger and his gang moved their headquarters to Chicago.

In this gang were three of the prize hoodlums of the decade—Harry Pierpont, Dillinger's "Trigger Man," Russell Clark, and Charles Makley.

It was this trio who, dressed in the height of fashion, sauntered into the jail at Lima and liberated Jumping John Dillinger after killing the sheriff and locking his wife, with a deputy, in a cell.

Thus delivered, Dillinger and his comrades disappeared, and the next day a reward of \$7,000 was placed on their collective heads.

Stung by the Bug, the gang popped up in East Chicago, Indiana, where Dillinger himself is credited with murdering Patrolman William O'Malley.

Then came the western invasion. Flushed with the cash they had lifted from banks, the gang arrived in Tucson, Arizona, under the guise of wealthy tourists. Makley, Clark and Pierpont had their "wives" with them, and all seven registered at the Congress Hotel, a famous hostelry in that section.

Shortly after they had settled down to enjoy the calm of that western metropolis, however, an oil furnace in the basement of the hotel had the temerity to catch fire. Quickly the blaze got underway, and in no time at all guests were compelled to flee for their lives.

The Dillinger retinue was ensconced on the third floor. Leisurely assembling their equipment, which included an arsenal of machine guns and ammunition, in addition to their personal effects, they started to descend by the elevator; but by that time even the stairway was in flames.

THE situation looked menacing until firemen conveniently raised their ladders right next to the windows of their suite. This was a break. Killer Dillinger's phenomenal luck still held. They descended with alacrity, pouring a profuse flood of thanks into the firemen's ears. Such was their gratitude that they tipped firemen William Benedict and Kenneth Pender twelve dollars for their assistance—but not until these firemen had rescued the gang's "luggage" from the room.

At the time this luggage seemed inordinately heavy, but the twelve-dollar tip dissipated any evil thoughts, in the excitement of the hotel fire.

Several days later these two firemen were to think a great deal of that luggage. According to report, they happened to the time with a magazine devoted to detective thrillers and came upon the pictures of a number of fugitives. These pictures tallied with the description of one of the men whose luggage they had rescued from the Congress Hotel only a short time before.

Abashed with excitement, they reported to the police, and thus paved (Please turn to page 62)

Your Dentist's Detective

"It's a good thing we made these X-ray pictures. Here's a small hidden cavity which I could not discover without my X-ray detective."



POSTPONING a visit to your dentist is not postponing trouble. It is bringing it closer. Time and money will be saved by a visit to your dentist every six months. It is impossible to have good health if the teeth, gums and soft tissues of your mouth are not kept in good condition.

If your dentist advises X-ray pictures of your teeth, take his advice. With the X-ray to inform him, he knows the condition of the deeper structures, the roots and the tooth sockets. In many cases early cavities can be found only by X-rays. If you have pyorrhea he may discover it at a stage in which it can be successfully treated.

Because an aching tooth demands prompt attention it is usually far less dangerous to health than the undiscovered trouble-maker. A tooth may seem to be sound and healthy and yet hidden trouble may be brewing. Infection may exist at the root of a guilty tooth long before it is suspected that anything is wrong. Meanwhile, the surround-

ing bony structure is being broken down and destroyed, while infection may be absorbed into the system through the blood stream. Such infection may damage the heart and other vital organs, may cause eye, ear, sinus, nerve, joint or digestive trouble.

When a firmly rooted tooth is to be extracted an X-ray picture may be needed to assist the dentist. Sometimes the roots are hooked or teeth may have failed to come through the gums. In such cases damage to the jaw-bone may result from a "blind" extraction.

If you have sound teeth and gums, then a correct diet, including some hard and "crunchy" food, will help to keep them healthy. Teeth, living parts of the body, are built by food. They need the minerals contained in eggs, milk, vegetables, fruits and cereals.

Send for the Metropolitan's free booklet, "Good Teeth." Address Booklet Dept. 834-B.



METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

FREDERICK H. ECKER, PRESIDENT

ONE MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

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Are You Responsible for Dillinger?

(Continued from page 60)

the way for one of the most singular captures in the history of criminology. C. A. Wollard, who was Chief of Police, effected this coup without firing a shot.

This amazing feat electrified the nation. The only thing remaining was a division of the spoils, in which state rights played a conspicuous part.

The State of Ohio demanded Makley, Pierpont, and Clark for the murder of Sheriff Saber, at Lima. Indiana wanted Dillinger for the East Chicago slaying of Officer O'Malley.

The battle between the states for extradition rights was brief but snappy. After a telephone conversation with Governor McNutt, of Indiana, in which he promised to release Pierpont, Clark and Makley to Ohio, Arizona's Governor, B. B. McCreary, signed extradition papers for all four men.

THEN came the return of the fugitives. Dillinger, snarling like the cornered rat he was, put up a fight but was quickly overpowered and put in irons. Then he was shoved in a fast plane and taken to Chicago. His three companions, meanwhile, had begun the long ride to the Buckeye State.

From this point on the Dillinger drama becomes the prize comic opera of the century. He was delivered to the Lake County Jail, at Crown Point, Indiana, on January 30, 1934. Exactly thirty-five days later came the "wooden pistol" episode and the sensational escape. In its brazen audacity it is comparable to the Wooden Horse of Troy. Let us reenact this ludicrous scene and observe the strategy of Master Dillinger.

On the day of his astonishing get-away Dillinger with fourteen other prisoners were milling about in the exercise room on the second floor of the jail. That within itself is a curious fact. Dillinger had been hunted over the nation as a renegade and killer. Why was he not in an escape-proof cell?

Mrs. Lilian Holley, Indiana's woman sheriff, hadn't thought it necessary. When Dillinger was turned over to her for safe-keeping she told the world that Dillinger would stick. "He'll never get out of this jail," she said with conviction.

While the men were doing their daily dozen, Deputy Sheriff Ernest Blunk came into the enclosure. He was after the finger-prints of a newly arrived prisoner. As he moved through the door Dillinger leaped forward.

"Stick 'em up," screamed the Killer, shoving what appeared to be a gun in the deputy's ribs. Dumbfounded, Blunk obeyed. He was flung into a cell. As if it were a play that had been pre-arranged, Warden Lew Baker then came into the room. He was followed by Turnkey Sam Cahoon and Wm Bryan, a vigilante. Without batting an eye Dillinger turned the fake gun on them. "Stick 'em up," he cried, backing them into a cell; and as they obeyed, "Gimme them keys!"

There were three keys on the ring. Reeking with the locked terror-stricken jailers in a cell and then drove the prisoners into the open bull pen.

His next move was to gain the corridor, a comparatively easy maneuver, and in less than a minute later he had entered the office of Sheriff Holley.

Ah, here was what he wanted. Machine guns! He seized two of these, caught up a couple of automatics and filled his pockets with ammunition. Thus armed, he returned to the bull pen and turned his guns on the flabbergasted officers.

In that group of prisoners was Herbert Youngblood, a negro. "Help me," barked Dillinger, "and I'll get you out of here." The negro stepped forward with alacrity. Thrusting a gun into his hands, Dillinger—with the hapless Blunk ahead of him, made his way out of the jail and into a garage where five mechanics were at work.

"Give me the fastest car in this garage," the slat-eyed Dillinger cried, menacing them with the machine gun. Four mechanics shot their hands in the air. The fifth, Edward Sagers, who was working on the Sheriff's new eight-cylinder Ford, indicated that this was the fastest car.

"Get in," ordered Dillinger, shoving him into the back seat. "Here," he hissed in Blunk's ear, "you drive." Blunk slid behind the wheel. Dillinger got into the front seat with Blunk while Youngblood climbed in with the mechanic, covering him all the while with his gun.

Under Dillinger's terse orders the car zigzagged a deceptive course to the Illinois State line, where Blunk and Sagers, who expected to be killed any minute, were ordered to the ground.

"I've been in my last jail," the Killer exulted, tossing four dollars to his liberated captives. "They will never take me alive."

That four dollars was for them to get away with. They got. The word was flashed and the alarm spread, but Dillinger had disappeared down the road.

Then, for the first time, the cry was taken up in earnest. It resounded from coast to coast—"Get Dillinger." Every newspaper in the country bore flaming headlines. And organized nation-wide hunts began, while Dillinger, always one jump ahead of his pursuers, slipped like a phantom through a labyrinth of rooms and hidden retreats.

Twice the police have had him in traps and twice he has shot his way out of them, leaving a trail of dead and wounded that makes kill-thrill fiction tame as water.

MEANWHILE, back in Ohio, Pierpont, Clark, and Makley were not faring so well. Pierpont and Makley were tried for the murder of the Lima Sheriff and sentenced to die in the electric chair, at the State Penitentiary, in Columbus, while Clark was sentenced to life imprisonment.

This trio, as you will recall, killed Sheriff Saber while "springing" Dillinger from the jail at Lima.

Would Dillinger try to liberate his erstwhile pals? The State of Ohio believed he would, and took steps at once to checkmate any such endeavor. To frustrate possible kidnaping, a double guard was placed about Governor George Whitely. The National Guard was called out to make it absolutely certain the condemned murderers could not escape. Then Ohio offered a \$1,000 reward for Dillinger, dead or alive.

After the wooden pistol episode and the report that Dillinger was hiding in

Chicago the banking elements were thrown into panic. Banks were Dillinger's prey—he needed thousands in cash to pay his way from day to day. It is said nearly one hundred banks took the precaution of doubling guards. Hot on his trail, the police came within an ace of nabbing Dillinger in those first few days after his escape. Following a tip, they made a number of raids along the North Side, including one on a hotel in Rokeby Street, but their bird had winged it out of there. On another occasion, following another hot tip, the vice squad descended on a Chicago apartment that literally proved to be a nest of wanted men. What followed was one of those motion picture brawls, gangland versus the law. When the smoke lifted three notorious gunmen were dead in their tracks—but Jumping Jack Dillinger was not among them.

LITTLE Bohemia Lodge, in the wilds of Wisconsin, was the scene upon which the battle lines now converged. Desperate, wounded, beset on all sides, Dillinger and his mob had slunk away to this north woods sanctuary hoping for a few days' respite before the bulldogs of the law came howling to his door.

But once again, through that curious grapevine system of false confederates and stool pigeons, Dillinger's hand had been tipped. A trap was set. This one was to be fool-proof. About the lodge a net of armed officers, with orders to shoot on sight, was spread. It was a human noose with which they hoped to snare the elusive renegade.

But Dillinger didn't snare him. He fled in the night, between lulls in the firing, and when at dawn the gang was routed by tear-gas bombs, only three women staggered out into the early light. Dillinger had faded from the scene as early as 3 a.m. and at that moment was licking his wounds, safe for the moment, miles away.

They say that even rats have a certain kind of courage. Perhaps this might explain the swaggering impudence of the man who for a while has hoodwinked the nation. Needing bullet-proof vests, he calmly held up a police station, and took them. That wasn't bravery. It was insanity. He just happened to get away with it.

While officers beat the underbrush like hunters trying to get up a deer, he dropped in on his old dad one night. But love of parent hardly prompted this move. You wouldn't expect an ingrate who could so persecute his own flesh and blood, to be motivated by an unselfish interest, would you? He did it because at the time it seemed the smart thing to do, and once again he happened to get away with it.

It never entered the killer's head that if this visit had been anticipated by the law, a pitched battle would have resulted, with the likelihood that his father would have been killed. Consideration for the other fellow, even when the other fellow happens to be his own father, is something Dillinger knows nothing about.

When, to his father's astonishment, Jumping John did arrive, an aide-de-camp and a woman accompanied him. "What's she doing with you?" his father inquired pointedly.

(Please turn to page 64)



Dr. Latzel is Physician-in-Chief of Internal Clinic, in Vienna's largest free hospital; author of "Symptoms of Gastric Cancer."

"All three of his ailments disappeared... *quickly*"

says DR. ROBERT LATZEL, clinic head in Vienna's largest free hospital

Read Dr. Latzel's complete explanation of this case . . . it may be similar in many ways to yours!

"**M**R. H. B.," Dr. Latzel reports, "was a civil engineer. He had become chronically tired out, with boils, a very poor appetite and the usual distressing stomach symptoms."

"His abdomen was flabby, large. Intestines were weak, clogged. He was nearly always constipated."

"I put him on a Yeast diet—asked him to report back in a week. By that time, one of his boils was gone, another had

started to dry up. In 3 weeks, his skin was entirely clear, he had good color, healthy appetite. Constipation stopped. He showed every sign of improved energy."

"Run-down health, poor complexion, indigestion, heartburn, and other troubles usually come from poisons carried through the blood from the intestines," states Dr. Latzel. "Yeast softens the clogging waste in the body so you can clear it out . . . regularly."

Why not go to your grocer, or a

restaurant or soda fountain and get some Fleischmann's Yeast right now . . . then eat 3 cakes every day, following the directions on the label? Each cake is rich in vitamins B, D and G that every one of us needs.

Start to eat Fleischmann's Yeast today! And keep it up for 30 days at least! See what it's like to feel real well!

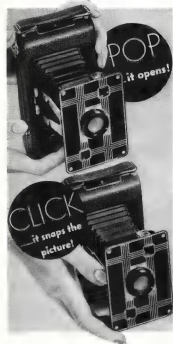


Fleischmann's Yeast Does 3 Things for You—It (1) stimulates your stomach juices (2) strengthens the muscles of your stomach and intestines (3) softens waste so it passes easily from the body.

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So Easy...

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with JIFFY KODAK
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THERE'S a new way to take snapshots—an easier way. With a Jiffy Kodak . . . the smart folding camera that's so simple to use.

At the touch of a button the Jiffy leaps out—ready for action. A click of the shutter and you've made a picture.

Smartly designed in metal and enamels—as trim as a lady's compact. The Jiffy comes in two sizes . . . for 2½ x 4¼ inch pictures, \$9 . . . for 2¼ x 3¼ inch pictures, \$8. If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.



YOU'LL get better pictures with Verichrome Film. In the glaring sun or the porch's shade—this film gets the picture. The cheaper the camera . . . the slower the lens—the more the need for Verichrome. Load your camera with Verichrome for better pictures. Eastman Kodak Co., Rochester, New York.

Are You Responsible for Dillinger?

(Continued from page 62)

The outlaw leered: "I like a home cooked meal now and then. She cooks it."

Since then he has slipped like a phantom from city to city and state to state. He travels in high-powered cars bristling with machine guns. At his heels crowds a pack of mongrels. Obviously something must be done to remedy a situation that enables kill-frenzy to find such easy sailing. But what if the law does get him—as it eventually will? Getting Dillinger won't bring fifteen dead men back to life. Executing him or shooting him down in his tracks won't lift the stigma that will follow his sisters to the grave. The answer lies in prevention—not merely in punishment.

They say an offending eye should be plucked out. That takes care of the eye, but what about the rest of the body? Wouldn't it be better to cure the embryo sty before it degenerates into cancer?

The law can't attend to this. It may only punish offenders. But society can, if it is sincere in its desire to cut down crime. In the majority of states a determined society has deemed it advisable, upon proper provocation, to take human life. Why can't it make up its mind to clamp down on youthful undesirables and remove them so irrevocably that murder and pillage will be impossible?

In other words, when Dillinger, as a youngster, stole an automobile, why was that charge changed from theft to disorderly conduct and his sentence suspended?

When he went to prison for robbery and assault and established an unparalleled record as a recalcitrant behind bars, why was this record shoved aside and a parole given him? If he had stayed where he belonged, murdered men would now be happy in the bosoms of their families. The govern-

ment would not be spending millions—think of it, millions—to capture one man.

It will be argued that paroles are essential—but when a case presents itself that can not be qualified, no alternative is left. You can't qualify Dillinger. His blood was good blood. Other children in his own environment grew up into useful citizens. His home was a Christian home.

Knowing this, a squeamish society permitted him to sift through its fingers, although even as a juvenile his inherent viciousness was in evidence. Could not a more resolute system have prevented this? We the People, who must answer these questions, rebel at the thought of a ruthless, uncompromising code of our children, yet when our children grow up to be murderers, it is we the People who must pay for our squeamishness.

In the case of John Dillinger, let us see what the toll of this negligence amounts to:

Thirteen men have died sudden and violent deaths.

Banks have been robbed.

He is liar and thief.

A failure in school—he deserted.

He joined the United States Navy—and deserted.

In accepting salvation he robbed with one hand while shaking hands with his minister with the other.

From the cradle he has been antisocial.

He has shamed the name of his fathers.

He has been false to every trust—marriage, church, home.

Not one redeeming feature is there to his credit.

What are we the People going to do about it? Not merely about this John Dillinger—but about future Dillingers? That's what society would like to know.

Pretty Girls Look Cool

(Continued from page 17)

season, as her skin gradually becomes darker. And she chooses darker lipstick. The usual tone of lipstick looks glaring and inharmonious when cheeks are tanned.

Cheek rouge should be very lightly used by the girl who goes in for tan, whether she gets it from a powder box or from the sun. That is, in the daytime. For the bright outdoor light of vacation time makes heavily rouged cheeks look hot and rather blowsy. In the evening, of course, when more tempered and flattering lights are gleaming, cheek rouge may be more generously used.

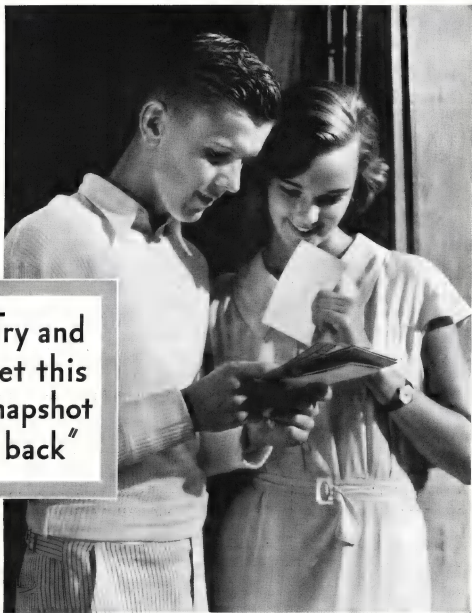
Waterproof cosmetics come in for a lot of praise from the girl who swims to keep cool. They really make it possible to look natural when you are in the water. Lipsticks and rouge come in this form, and so does mascara.

Cosmetics for the legs and feet get more attention in vacation days than at other times. Lotions that keep the skin smooth and flawless are much used. It is a favorite trick now to use brilliant enamel polish on the toe nails matching that on the finger nails. The hands must not be forgotten in Summer. They quickly show the results of all sorts of outdoor activities

if they are the least bit neglected. So long as hands are looked after regularly—manicured and creamed and anointed with soothing lotions—they are all right. But if they are allowed to acquire the effects of a whole summer's bad treatment, they may suffer permanently. The school-girl's skin has enough resiliency so that it will stand a lot of exposure and really come back. But the older woman should remember that careless exposure of the skin will make it permanently coarse and rough.

One of the quickest ways to look all hot and bothered about the weather is to let the hair grow scraggly.

A becoming coiffure that can be easily kept in order should be chosen for the vacation and for the Summer generally. The hair should be shampooed frequently to keep it free from dust and perspiration incident to outdoor exercise. It should be protected against too much sun. Blond hair especially is burned by hot sun and sometimes a lovely color is ruined in this way. And it should be carefully washed after its owner swims in a salt water pool or the ocean. Hair on which salt water is allowed to dry usually becomes harsh and unattractive.



**"Try and
get this
snapshot
back"**

He'll carry it and look at it and show it until it's worn dog-eared—this square of paper. Because it's a snapshot of *the* girl. Her smile. Her sweetness. Put down on paper, by some magic, so he can carry it around with him, and feel always that she's near. Now pictures like this are easier to make than ever. *Kodak Verichrome Film* extends snapshot possibilities amazingly. Eastman Kodak Co., Rochester, New York.

The pictures you will want TOMORROW . . . you must take TODAY

VACATIONISTS!

Don't forget to pack
in the most important
thing of all!



THE vacation rush is on! Packing left for the last minute! When you check up, be sure that you've taken along one of the most important things of all—a good supply of Ex-Lax!

A change of cooking, different water, staying up late nights—all these things are apt to throw you off-schedule.

And when you're off-schedule—even temporarily—you can't get the full fun out of your vacation. So if you're looking forward to happy vacation days—take this extra precaution: Take along a liberal supply of Ex-Lax.

Ex-Lax, the chocolateated laxative, works over-night without over-action. It doesn't cause stomach pains. It doesn't form a habit. You don't have to take Ex-Lax every day of your vacation, like some laxatives. And Ex-Lax is good for every member of the family.

At all drug stores, 10c and 25c.



Murders that Couldn't Happen

(Continued from page 31)

answering. "Yes—John was."

"That's a lie!" John snapped. "You know I was just coming out of my door when you saw me."

"I rather thought," said Cortez, "that you were just going in your door."

John Thorndyke swung quickly on the Sergeant, his face flaming.

"If you want the truth," he said, "when I entered the hall I saw Cortez sneaking back into the library."

There was a moment of silence. Professor Baker looked interestedly at the two men. Obviously they disliked each other intensely. Either each was trying to make it uncomfortable for the other—or one was lying. He was rather surprised when McCarthy dropped the whole matter.

"I take it you came into this room together. What did you find here?"

"James was sitting in that chair," said Cortez, pointing, "slumped across the table, the revolver in his right hand. He was quite dead when I examined him. I rang the bell for Drake and had him call Doctor Thorndyke."

McCarthy turned to John.

"And what did you do?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I just stood around helpless for a time," John said. "The thing sort of knocked me out, coming right on top of Alice's death. It was an awful shock. After a while I went and told Arthur about it, and both of us told Sonia."

MCCARTHY again put his thumbs in the arms of his vest. He looked hopefully at the Professor as if expecting him to say something. But the Professor was toying with his gold Phi Beta Kappa key, turning it over and over in his little fingers. McCarthy released one hand from his vest and scratched his head.

"Anybody else in the house, Doc?"

"There's Drake, my butler," Thorndyke said. "He's been with me for years. Since long before Mrs. Thorndyke died, in fact. Then there's Mrs. Swinburne, the housekeeper. She's been here—it must be all of five years. Dora Ranny, our office assistant, has a room on the third floor. Rosini is the gardener and chauffeur."

McCarthy blinked. "And all these people were in the house tonight?"

"Yes, their quarters are above."

McCarthy scratched his head again—hard this time. He looked once more at Professor Baker, and then at Police-Surgeon Swan.

"Well, Swan," he said, "what do you think? Still suicide?"

"Sure," said Swan. "Nothing else but. The boy just plain shot himself."

Professor Baker heard his own voice speaking. He didn't intend it to speak, but he heard it sounding against his will across the room.

"But he didn't shoot himself," his voice said. "If you'll notice his necktie and his shoe laces—the way they're tied backwards—and the way the sleeves of his coat are worn—you'll find that gun the way it was found, or shot himself the way he was shot. You see James is left-handed—and the gun was in his right hand. . . ."

Three evenings later Professor Baker was sitting with Mary in his cozy living room. Across his knees was

a copy of "The Moral Influence of Art," but for once Baker was not being influenced by sculptured or painted beauty. He was writing thoughtfully with a pencil on a large sheet of paper, and he was so intent that he started violently when the doorbell rang.

Mary answered it and the Professor heard Police-Sergeant McCarthy's deep voice rumbling in the hallway. The Sergeant came forward with an outstretched hand and a cordial smile.

"Evening, Professor! I was passing by and thought I'd drop in a minute."

The Professor politely indicated a chair. It was the first time he had seen McCarthy off duty, and he was surprised to find the policeman almost human.

"This Thorndyke business has got me off my nut, Professor. Two deaths—one an accident, and one a suicide—nothing to put a finger on. But there's a feeling about that house that's got me scared. I've got a hunch there's something wrong about it. You knowing the Thorndykes, I thought maybe you could tell me something about the family that I don't know."

The Professor shrugged thin shoulders. "I've known the doctor for a good many years. And I knew his wife before she died. She was a Truesdale—that's where the house came from. A fine woman, Sarah, but—well, perhaps overly sentimental. She had a passion for marriage, wanted every one of her children to marry—and then, sadly enough, died before she had seen even one of them stand before an altar."

McCarthy rubbed his hands impatiently. "That's ancient history," he said. "I want to find out something about the live ones."

Half reluctantly Professor Baker extended the paper he had been writing when the bell rang. He blushed slightly, and turned his face away as the Sergeant grinned.

"Say! This thing is getting you, Professor! Thinking of being a detective?"

McCarthy chuckled and read the paper:

1. Dr. C. J. Thorndyke, 60. Came to New York in 1890; married Sarah Truesdale, 1892. Five children. Comparatively poor until his marriage, then his wife inherited the Truesdale fortune which she kept in her own name.
2. Dr. Emanuel Cortez, 35. Been with Thorndyke nine years, first as assistant and later as a partner. Studied medicine University of Madrid. Engaged to Sonia Thorndyke, but no announcement has been made. Quarreled three weeks ago with John, who opposes the union with his sister.
3. John Thorndyke, 29. Real-estate. Sober, serious, industrious. Is heavily in debt at two banks. Spends all his time between office and home.
3. Arthur Thorndyke, 27. No occupation. Spends his time reading philosophy and puttering with writing. Is interested in Dora Ranny.
5. Sonia Thorndyke, 26. Studied music. Has what she calls temperament and everyone else calls temper. Apparently she is (Please turn to page 68)



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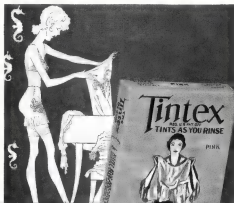
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Murders that Couldn't Happen

(Continued from page 68)

- deeply in love with Dr. Cortez.
6. George Drake, 60, butler. Has been thirty years with the Thorndyke family.
7. Mrs. Swinburne, 40, housekeeper. Been five years with the Thorndykes.
8. Dora Ranny, 24. Studied nursing, and assists both doctors. Pretty, clever, blonde. I have seen her many times with Arthur Thorndyke.
9. Rosini, 33, gardener-chauffeur. Italian. Has no friends. Leads a quiet sober life.

McCarthy folded the paper. "Mind if I keep this?" he asked. "You know, Baker, there's something about that house that's getting me. It's so old and alone and queer—"

Professor Baker looked at the Sergeant in mild surprise. He had never expected this big policeman to feel anything but a stubborn duty to his job. He thought of the Thorndyke house, and shivered a bit himself. It was old and alone and queer—and he had a sudden feeling that more queer things were to happen there. The telephone rang in the next room and Mary came to the doorway.

"It's for Sergeant McCarthy," she said.

The Sergeant pulled his bulk out of the chair and grinned.

"Hope you don't mind Headquarters calling your house, Baker. I told them I was coming here."

But the Sergeant was not grinning when he returned to the room. His usual red face was quite pale and his solid jaw had dropped.

"Professor," he said, "there's hell to pay. That was Swan calling."

Professor Baker answered very softly.

"Who is it this time?"

"Arthur has been found dead in the Thorndyke garage . . . !"

It was comforting this time to have company in approaching the Thorndyke place. For the first time Professor Baker was pleased with the Sergeant's presence. The solid bulk of the man lent an assurance of safety to the darkness of that tree-strewn yard on Morningside.

They found Doctor Thorndyke pacing nervously in the hall, an unlighted cigar in his teeth. Cortez was sitting in a corner talking with Sonia. John was beside them looking slightly stunned.

"It is this time, Swan?" McCarthy demanded. "Suicide again?"

"It amounts to that."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that no one killed this young man. He was found in the garage suffocated by fumes of carbon monoxide from the exhaust of the motor."

"Any marks on him?"

"Yes—a cut on his forehead. But it was made when his head struck the fender as he fell."

"Who found him?"

"Rosini—the gardener. His room's at the back of the house. He heard the motor running and went down to see what was up. The garage doors were closed and the body was lying on the floor."

"I'll have a talk with Rosini," growled McCarthy. "And I'd like to take a look at this garage. Come

along, Professor, will you?"

Professor Baker shifted uneasily. He wanted to talk with his friend Doctor Thorndyke, but there seemed to be a command in the Sergeant's voice. Glancing sympathetically at the doctor, he docilely followed Swan and the Sergeant.

They left the house by a rear door and walked across a short path toward the old stables, now used as a garage. The night was dark and in the shadows of the trees the gloom was almost impenetrable. The stable was used for three cars and each set of doors now stood wide open. It was to a roadster on the right that Swan led them.

"The body was here," he said, "on the floor, by the right front wheel. Rosini can tell you about it."

Rosini proved to be a keen little Italian. He had little, quick hands and his teeth flashed when he talked.

"I am upstairs—my room—up there. I hear a motor running a long time—I look out—I think maybe somebody stealing a car and I come down. I sneak up to the front door and look in—the motor is running."

"I open the door and the gas smoke—she terrible! I open all the door and let her out. Then I go in and shut off the motor. On the floor—here—is Mr. Arthur—there's cut in his head. I run to get Doctor Thorndyke and they carry him away."

"Did you see anyone around the garage?"

"No, there's no one."

Professor Baker had been standing helplessly to one side putting with the tools and waste on a small work bench which was in the corner of the garage. For the first time he spoke.

"You said, Mr. Swan, that a cut was made in Arthur's head when he fell?"

"Yes. On this fender—you can see for yourself."

The Police-Surgeon pointed to a spot on the edge of the fender where there was an unmistakable stain of blood.

"Carbon monoxide gas is deadly. It knocks you out all in a second and without warning. We have such accidents as this nearly every day."

"Accident?" the Professor said softly. "There is something here on this work bench that might interest you. If that cut on Arthur's head wasn't caused by the fender—it might very easily have been made by this."

From the bench Professor Baker held out a small but heavy wrench. It had evidently been hurriedly wiped on a bit of waste, but the metal end of it was still sticky with blood.

"It is just possible," he said, "that Arthur was knocked unconscious, the motor started, and the doors closed."

"By God!" McCarthy cried. "I'll have everybody in the house on the carpet for this!"

He did. Professor Baker admired the man's tenacity and patience. Far into the night McCarthy questioned everyone connected with the Thorndyke household. Just as on the night James was killed everyone was again on the premises—but no two of them had been together. The servants were in separate rooms on the third floor; Doctor Thorndyke was in the library; John was in his room and Sonia in hers; Cortez was in the office, and Dora Ranny had just returned to the (Please turn to page 70)

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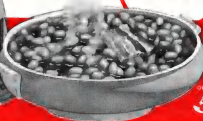


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ONE OF THE
57

Murders that Couldn't Happen

(Continued from page 68)

house. Not one had an alibi, and against none of them could McCarthy, with all his blustering, uncover a shred of evidence.

He dismissed the whole family presently and turned to Baker.

"Damn it, Professor, this thing's getting me!"

It was getting Professor Baker, too. It was past midnight now—two hours after his usual bed time—and the Professor was a bit sleepy. But his friend Carl Thorndyke was in terrible trouble, and if there was anything he could do to help he wanted to do it. He shook himself awake, like a little terrier, and looked at McCarthy.

"The way these people were killed, Sergeant, would seem to be something to work on. Alice, by a heavy picture falling from the wall; James, an obvious case of suicide; and Arthur by an 'accidental' closing of the garage doors. If I were a policeman I'd think over just what sort of a mind would plan deaths like these."

The Sergeant fell back on his old habit of scratching his head.

"One with imagination," he ventured. "It certainly took a lot of planning to make them all look like accidents."

Baker slowly shook his head.

"Knowing nothing of police methods, Sergeant, I'd say the person who planned these crimes had no imagination. They're too commonplace—too every-day. Anyone with imagination would have dressed them up—left false clues to indicate an intruder or a robbery." Baker smiled slightly, then went on apologetically, "I'm afraid this won't help you much, Sergeant. For the persons involved are two doctors—scientific men notoriously devoid of imagination—a doctor's daughter, a real estate agent, a nurse, and four servants."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Baker—it sounds screwy to me. All I know is that everybody in this house had the opportunity and the means to murder these people. The gun was kept in an open drawer in Thorndyke's desk, the wrench was lying on that work bench, and anybody could have loosened the plaster around that picture. . . . Say! You don't think maybe somebody around here is half-cracked, do you?"

The Professor shivered slightly at the words. He had thought the same thing himself, but he would not have mentioned it. He remembered that Sarah Truesdale had been a little "queer"—over-sentimental, strangely fixed concepts, with a peculiar love and reverence for marriage. He spoke hesitatingly.

"There is one thing, Sergeant, that I have noticed."

"What?"

"Alice Thorndyke was about to be married—she was killed. Arthur Thorndyke was seriously interested in Dora Ranny—he was killed—"

"How about James? I haven't heard of him being troubled with any love affairs."

"No—but you remember it was James who first raised the question that perhaps Alice's death was not an accident. He might have known something—might have found out something—that made his removal necessary to the murderer."

McCarthy again scratched his head.

Murders that Couldn't Happen

There was a small lamp burning in the room and he stared at it a moment.

"I don't follow you, Professor. Maybe I'm dumb, but—"

"Certainly not, Sergeant."

"Thanks. But what has this marriage business got to do with it?"

"I'm not sure that it has anything to do with it. But, if I were you, Sergeant, tomorrow I'd go down to the Bureau of Records and get a copy of Sarah Truesdale Thorndyke's will."

"Her—will—! Why, that's ancient history—"

From the shadows of the doorway there came a sudden flash and explosion. Professor Baker slumped down in his chair, his arms and hands limp. McCarthy stood a moment, his face bewildered. The faint sound of feet hurriedly climbing stairs came from the hall.

"Professor!" McCarthy's voice rang across the room. "Professor!"

Professor Baker calmly opened one blue eye behind his spectacles. Then the other eye opened and a grim look crossed his mouth.

"It's all right, Sergeant."

McCarthy pointed a big finger at the hole in the tapestried back of the Professor's chair.

"That bullet missed you by inches!"

"I felt it go by," said Professor Baker. "I thought it might be unwise to appear too lively—or there might be a second."

"I'll get the man that did it!" snapped McCarthy. "He's somewhere in this house—I heard him go upstairs!"

"I'm afraid, Sergeant, there is something else to do first," Baker said wearily.

"What?"

"Investigate the fourth death."

"Fourth—death!"

"Yes. I am very sorry. If I had only thought quicker I might have saved her."

"Saved who?"

"Sonia Thorndyke."

"What makes you think something's happened to her?"

"Because she was engaged to Dr. Cortez, Sergeant. And because of that bullet just fired at us. For the first time the murderer is afraid. He has slipped somewhere—and this time, I hope, you will get him!"

IN the dim upper hall McCarthy and Professor Baker paused before Sonia's door. The house was utterly silent. Evidently, Dr. Thorndyke's previous statement that the old walls muffled sound was true. Obviously, no one had heard the revolver shot below.

McCarthy pushed open the door. The lights in the room were on, and sitting in a chintz-covered chair by a table was Sonia Thorndyke. On her lap was an open book, but her wide eyes were not looking at the pages. They were staring blankly and sightlessly at the far wall.

"God!" McCarthy gasped.

Professor Baker stood quietly in the doorway, his little eyes roving alertly about the room. For the first time in his brief "career" in crime the Professor seemed intensely interested. After all, this was his friend's daughter, the fourth child that had died mysteriously. And more than that, though not a fighting man, the Professor re-

(Please turn to page 72)

"Thanks...and here's a tip on flavor"

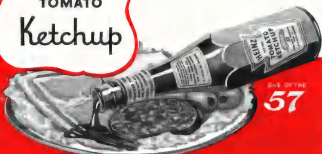


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Murders that Couldn't Happen

(Continued from page 71)

sented that bullet which had fanned so closely by his cheek.

The room seemed entirely normal. It was a typical girl's room, with blue curtains and bed spread, an array of toilet articles on a dressing table, a French doll propped up on the lace pillows of the bed. Beside Sonia was a small table with a lamp, an open box of candy, and an ash tray. In the tray were the stubs of two smoked cigarettes.

McCarthy turned, his face pale. "I can't see a mark on this girl," he said.

"Death must have come very suddenly," the Professor murmured. "She was smoking a cigarette when it happened. It dropped from her fingers and burned out on the rug."

He pointed to the butt of a cigarette between the chair and table. It was half-smoked and had smoldered out. Around it was a small burn.

The examination that followed brought out very little that was useful. Carl Thorndyke was greatly shocked. In fact, Doctor Cortez insisted that he retire at once and, with the Professor clinging to one arm, led Thorndyke to his room. Baker patted his friend's hand before leaving him.

"Anything that can be done, Carl, will be done."

He went back to Sonia's room and presently Doctor Cortez followed. Cortez also was grief-stricken, and the Professor remembered that he was engaged to Sonia.

"Look her over, will you, Doc?" McCarthy said. "I'd like to have your opinion before Swan gets here."

Cortez nerved himself and made a hurried examination.

"There's no wound of any kind," he said quietly. "Sonia had a large heart leakage which could have caused death at any time. Her father and I were both aware of it and were treating it constantly. She shouldn't have smoked," he added, pointing to the ash tray. "With her heart in the condition it was, any stimulant was dangerous. In fact, I didn't know she *did* smoke."

"Of course she did," John Thorndyke said. "I often warned her against it."

McCarthy's face lighted and he stepped forward eagerly. "Maybe she didn't smoke those cigarettes! They could have been smoked by some man in this room!"

Professor Baker shook his head.

"No," he said. "You see, on the tip of each of them is a faint red stain—lipstick. I've often noticed it on cigarettes the girls in my classes throw on the floor when I come into the room. However, there was a second person in this room when those cigarettes were smoked."

"How can you tell that?"

"Because," said Professor Baker, quietly, "it is impossible to light cigarettes without a means. There is no lighter in the room, Sergeant, and no matches in the ash tray!"

FOR the next two hours Professor Baker sat before an empty hearth in the Thorndyke living room. From where he sat he could see vague shadows in the corners and a round hole in the tapestried back of the chair he had sat in previously. Upstairs he knew Police-Sergeant Swan was examining the dead girl, and in another

room Doctor Thorndyke was lying, wide eyes staring at a white ceiling. He shifted uneasily in his chair when he heard feet coming down the stairs. McCarthy and Swan came into the room.

"The Doctor here says it looks like a natural death," McCarthy said.

"I can't really tell until the autopsy," Swan stated. "But there are certainly no signs of violence."

"I'm suspicious of that box of candy," McCarthy said. "Candy's been poisoned lots of times. I've been thinking about those cigarettes, too, Professor. They must have been smoked by Sonia, Dora Ranny or Mrs. Swinburne—they wouldn't have had lipstick on."

Professor Baker drew a weary hand across his forehead.

"Unless," he said, "the lipstick stain was rubbed on to make us think they were smoked by Sonia. I noticed a lipstick on her dressing table. But then, why was it done?"

PROFESSOR Baker began pacing the floor with short, measured steps. It had seen him agitated. Even when a bullet out of the dark had fanned his cheek the Professor had remained calm. But now he walked back and forth, turned jerkily, and paced again. He stopped suddenly and looked straight at McCarthy.

"That burn on the rug, Sergeant—that burn on the rug!"

"I don't see—" began McCarthy.

"If you want to clear up this case, Sergeant, get that copy of Sarah Thorndyke's will—quickly—now—to night!"

McCarthy stood a moment undecided.

"All right, Professor," he said. "I'll get it."

Left alone, Professor Baker continued his pacing. Then his eyes fell on a book on one of Thorndyke's shelves and he took it down with gentle fingers. It was Carson's "Leonardo da Vinci—His Life and Works." Very calmly the Professor sat in the chair with the bullet hole, adjusted the lamp, and opened the book across his little knees. And as calmly he drifted from the horrors of the Thorndyke house to the beauties of the Italian Renaissance.

He looked up mildly when McCarthy again came into the room.

"I got it," the Sergeant said. "Got the Clerk of New York County out of bed—but I got it!"

He passed a typewritten copy to Baker. The Professor read it through carefully, nodding several times. Finally he looked up.

"Have you read this, Sergeant?"

"Yeah."

"What do you think of it?"

"Well, maybe the old girl was half-cracked, and maybe she wasn't. It strikes me there's a lot of sense in it. All the money goes to the children when they're thirty years old—and not a penny to the doc."

"But did you notice, Sergeant, the clause that if any of the children marry, even before they are thirty, they get a double portion?"

"Sure I noticed it. We knew the old dame was sentimental on the idea of marriage."

Professor Baker folded his thin hands.

Murders that Couldn't Happen

"That's all very well for the ones who marry first. But, Sergeant—what about the others? There would be nothing left for them!"

A light of understanding—and admiration—began to gleam in Sergeant McCarthy's brown eyes. The more he saw of this little fellow the more amazed he became at the keenness and precision of his mind. He hoped things out which, when the Sergeant heard them, sounded so simple he wondered why he hadn't been able to think of them, himself. But where was the Professor headed for now?

"Say!" he began. "I'm beginning to think—"

"It isn't a time for thinking, Sergeant," Baker said calmly. "It's a time for doing."

"I still don't get it all! That burn on Sonia's rug, for instance—those cigarettes—"

"Those cigarettes were necessary, Sergeant—to explain that burn on the rug. It wasn't made by fire—it was made by acid. Hydrocyanic, probably—the deadliest fumes known. The murderer forced Sonia to breathe it. There would be no signs of violence, no traces in the stomach. Only the lungs would show that it was not a natural death."

"And the burn?"

"A drop of the acid spilled during the struggle of forcing Sonia to breathe it. And then the murderer tried to make us think that burn was caused by a dropped cigarette."

"And he is—?"

"The only one of the Thorndykes not contemplating marriage. The only one who was twenty-nine and in one year would inherit his share of his mother's estate providing there was any left. The man who was heavily in debt at two banks. The man who was seen by Cortez going to his room the night James was killed. The man who swore he knew Sonia did smoke. The man—"

"John Thorndyke!" McCarthy snapped.

"Exactly," Professor Baker nodded. "If you take him quickly, Sergeant, you will probably find he has a bottle of hydrocyanic acid—and a gun whose bullet will match that hole in the back of that chair. You may even find an acid burn on one of his hands. You will certainly find cigarettes of the same kind as those he smoked in Sonia's room—and probably a pocket lighter to light them. And you will probably see—"

McCarthy hitched his belt grimly. "All I want to see," he said, "is John Thorndyke!"

PROFESSOR BAKER listened to Police-Sergeant McCarthy's heavy feet mounting the stairs. Then he sighed. He glanced at "Leonardo da Vinci—His Life and Works," and finally tucked the book under his arm. His friend Dr. Thorndyke would not miss it, and Baker had always wanted to make a careful study of the work. His friend Dr. Thorndyke was going to be a heart-broken man for a long time to come.

In the hall Professor Baker paused for a moment to stare up at the sweet face of Sarah Truesdale Thorndyke, now hung again in her old place on the wall. Then, shrugging his thin shoulders, and with the book held tightly under one arm, the Professor went out.

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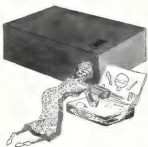


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THE ORIGINAL "LIPSTICK" DEODORANT

The MAKE-UP BOX

WE wish there were room enough to picture all the thrilling things that came to the Beauty Department this month... a fat green and white jar of cucumber emulsion for sallow skin... a tiny bottle of perfume with a cool fresh fragrance designed for warm weather... a white glazed pique beach kit trimmed with blue containing sunburn cream and sensitive skin cream, with an ample space for comb and dark glasses.

DID you ever notice how dry and chapped your lips become during summer months? Sun and salt water intensify this condition but there are two new kinds of pomade which come in green or red lipstick-like containers... one is white and the other a blush rose. Use them to correct chapped dry lips and remove all traces of indecipherable lip rouge.



WOULDN'T you like a personal complexion analysis by Hollywood's famous make-up expert? He will select for you the color harmony which is individually yours, which harmonizes with your complexion and emphasizes your personality. What you do is to fill out a questionnaire in which you tell all (about the color of your eyes, hair, complexion, skin texture, and so on). Then you are told exactly what make-up is correct for your type. Armed with this knowledge, you dash out and purchase the color harmony ensemble. It's a treasure chest of everything your heart desires... a huge jar of melting cleansing cream, finely textured face powder, a bottle of spicy skin freshener, eyebrow pencil, eye shadow and mascara, a superindispensable lipstick. When Pandora opened her magic box, she could have been no less excited than when we opened ours.

THE young lady pictured above may be lacking in smart apparel, but she's certainly not lacking in hot weather beauty aids. The jars, bottles and boxes which she is contemplating, while whisking a towel about her, are shown in their new summer dress... pale peach and tropical orange with masses of tropical flowers and



capped in sun-orange. Bathing, today, may be a dull routine or an enjoyable luxury. Bathe in water softened and scented by a handful of bath salts from the great plump bottle; step from the tub and pat on toilet water which leaves your body as fresh as early clover; then fluff on the chiffon-line bath powder to prolong the cool sensation. More detailed information about these glorious bath products may be found in this month's beauty circulars. Want one?

GOLF players welcomed these products for foot-relief with loud huzzahs! But there's no reason, why young mothers who find Junior's baby carriage outings a bit tiring, or even enthusiastic beauty editors who raise an occasional blister in their quest for beauty news, shouldn't use them too! One is a tube of medicated salve which when massaged in will cool the feet, quell pain, and reduce swelling. Then there's a special cuticle softener which does things for the old corns or callouses, if you are so afflicted. One treatment is as refreshing to the feet as a mint julep on a summer's day.



If you would like further information about the articles described, and other beauty news, write to the Beauty Editor, Make-up Box, Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Three Hundred Years to Make a Salad

(Continued from page 15)

prejudice vanished and in a few short years we have turned out to be the most salad-minded people in the world.

From France, Italy, Spain, Germany, we have taken suggestions in a whole hearted manner and to these traditional old world dishes we have added an entirely new list of salads that are the results of our own invention.

For some reason salads have never been highly thought of in the British Isles. You could rack your brains to recall an interesting salad of Scotch or Irish origin, and you might travel the length and breadth of England even today without encountering a salad that quite came up to your expectations.

A knowledge of the fine points of salad making is as old as Egypt. Skillful cooks studied the art of making salad dressing in Rome and Greece. But in the modern world France has undoubtedly taken the lead in salad culture. Don't forget however, that France is divided into two sections as far as salads go—one, including the southern sections, where olive oil is produced; and the other including sections too far north for olive raising, where butter and sometimes bacon are used to provide the traditional fat for the dressing.

French dressing, to us, always means a combination of olive oil and vinegar. But dressing made without olive oil is just as truly French. And what we call French dressing has been known as long to the olive-growing sections of Spain and Italy as it has to southern France.

Among Spanish settlers in this country the tradition of the olive oil type of dressing was early established, but in most parts of this country, one of the oil dressings, including mayonnaise, came to us as French concoctions.

German settlers in this country brought with them valuable contributions to our national salad lore.

The Russians, too, made their contributions, and somehow managed to obtain credit for the now popular Russian dressing, which was unquestionably an importation from France into Russia and had no place in native Russian cookery.

Within recent years Mexican salads based on the old Spanish idea of cooking have come to us through southern California across the borderland.

What really gave impetus to the salad movement in this country was the realization of the fact that salad greens contain much needed vitamins and minerals and that the age-old dressing, combining oil and acid of some sort, renders the fibrous leaves more easily digested.

We had been a long time learning. But once we were started on the way, nothing could stop us. From the four corners of the world we took our suggestions and adding something of our native invention, devised new types of salads of an entirely different sort.

Fruit salad and vegetable salad as we know them are definitely an American invention. They are as pleasing to the eye as to the palate, provide visiting Europeans with something to write home about and give globe-trotting Americans something for which they look in vain in foreign parts.

OLD AS ANCIENT EGYPT

New as Modern Paris..



-Alluring Eye Make-up

SINCE the time of Cleopatra, clever women have known that gracefully formed eyebrows, delicately shaded lids, and the appearance of long, dark, lustrous lashes add much to beauty.

Cleopatra, for all her wealth, had only crude materials with which to attempt this effect. How she would have revelled in being able to obtain smooth, harmless, and easy-to-apply preparations like Maybelline eye beauty aids!

To have formed beautiful, expressive eyebrows with the delightful, clean-marking Maybelline Eyebrow Pencil—to have applied the pure, creamy Maybelline Eye Shadow for just the right touch of colorful shadow—and, to have had the appearance of long, dark lashes instantly with Maybelline mascara—truly she would have exclaimed these beauty aids fit for a queen!

Nothing from modern Paris can rival Maybelline preparations. Their use by millions of women for over sixteen years commends them to YOU! Then... there is the highly beneficial Maybelline Eyelash Tonic Cream for preserving soft, silky lashes... and a dainty Maybelline Eyebrow Brush for brushing and massaging the brows and lashes. All Maybelline eye beauty aids may be had in purse sizes, 10c each at all 10c stores.

MAYBELLINE CO., CHICAGO



Maybelline Eyebrow Pencil
smoothly forms the eyebrows into graceful, expressive lines, without any artificial effect. Of highest quality, it is entirely harmless, and is clean to use and to carry. Black and Brown.



Maybelline Eye Shadow
delicately shades the eyelids, adding depth, color and sparkle to the eyes. Smooth and creamy, absolutely pure. Blue, Brown, Silvery, Violet and Green.



Maybelline Eyelash Grewer
A pure and harmless tonic cream, helpful in keeping the eyelashes and eyes in good condition. Colorless.



Maybelline Eyebrow Brush
Regular use of this specially designed brush will train the brows to lie flat and smooth at all times. Extra long, dainty-grip handle, and certified bristles, held close in a cellophane wrapper.



Maybelline

EYE BEAUTY AIDS

MAKE MEN WANT YOUR KISSES!



Give your lips alluring natural color... without a trace of paint

AFTER That First Kiss, a man likes you more than ever... unless, of course, your lips are coated with paint. For paint makes him think of lipstick, not of lips!

So to keep your lips alluring, use the lipstick which colors lips... without painting them. Tangee isn't paint. Instead it contains a color-change principle that makes it intensify your natural color and become a very part of your lips!

LOOKS ORANGE—ACTS ROSE

In the stick Tangee looks orange. On your lips it changes to the one shade of blush-rose most becoming to your type! Thus, Tangee keeps your lips youthful-looking with natural color. Moreover, its special cream base is soothing to dry, summer lips. Get Tangee today—59¢ and \$1.10 sizes. Also in Theatrical, a deeper shade for professional use. (See coupon offer below.)



UNTOUCHED—Lips left untouched are apt to have a faded look, make the face seem older.

PAINTED—Don't risk that painted look. It's coarsening and men don't like it.

TANGEE—Intensifies natural color, restores youthful appeal, ends that painted look.



Tangee Creme Rouge makes cheeks glow with natural rose color, even in swimming. Waterproof. Guaranteed. Get out those pores. Its vanishing cream base protects skin.

Don't be switched! Insist upon Tangee. And scrutinize the store that gives you what you ask for.

World's Most Famous Lipstick
TANGEE
ENDS THAT PAINTED LOOK

★ 4-PIECE MIRACLE MAKE-UP SET

THE GEORGE W. LUFF COMPANY TGB4
417 Fifth Avenue, New York City
Rush Miracle Make-Up Set of miniature Tangee Lipstick, Rouge Compact, Creme Rouge, Face Powder. I enclose 10¢ (stamps or coin).

Check Shade ☐ Flesh ☐ Rachel ☐ Light Rachel

Name _____ (Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Off the Record

(Continued from page 23)

Clipped Clipper

THE world's most expensive clipper of newspapers upped and quit the Agricultural Adjustment Administration the other day. Said he intended to clip short his clipping career, even though he got \$6,000 a year for it, and that he wanted to run for the Senate.

So ex-clipper Theodore G. Bilbo, former governor of Mississippi, is in his home state campaigning for a seat in the upper house. He figures he'll get it, too, because he's a phenologist and can tell pretty well about the future by the shape of people's heads.

As a clipper-of-newspapers de luxe Bilbo had an office in the magnificent Agriculture Department building and a succession of stenographers, some of whom were pretty and some of whom were smart.

One who was neither got Phenologist Bilbo into a swell jam. The department is still chucking about it.

It seemed that Bilbo had a large sedan, but no place to park it. He noticed that the Secretary of Agriculture and other big-wigs had special parking places reserved for their cars. So Bilbo sent his secretary to the man who sees about such things.

"Governor Bilbo wants a reserved space for his auto," said the stenographer.

"Sorry," replied the space reserver, "but there isn't any more room."

"Yes, but," butted the secretary, "the governor said for me not to come back without a place for his car."

Exasperated, the parking attendant exclaimed:

"It would take Dr. Einstein to find another place."

"Well," squelched Bilbo's assistant, "tell me where his office is and I'll go see him."

Bilbo's successor is Harry Price, one-time newsmen. He sticks to his clipping monkey work with phenology and goes to work on the street car.

Down with Sea Lions

THE United States House of Representatives has decided to a man that it was all a mistake about those sea lions the government has been protecting these many years.

They're ugly beasts and mean. The government isn't going to have any more truck with 'em. The down-with-sea-lions bill passed the House without a dissenting vote after the Merchant Marine, Radio and Fisheries Committee had explained the sea lion menace.

The Committee went into considerable detail about the home life of sea lions, explained that they had no commercial value, said they weighed up to three tons each, that they ate their weight in salmon every forty-eight hours whenever there were any salmon, and concluded:

"It seems unwise to protect them as game animals, since they are not game animals."

With that information before them, the 435 members of the House voted unanimously to rescind a bill which had protected the life and limb, if any, of sea lions ever since the memory of the oldest resident.

Thank the House for solving the sea lion problem. It was one of that body's last major acts before adjourning for the rest of the Summer.

and mailed them to themselves. They did so because they are paid according to the number of stamps cancelled in their offices. The more brickbats, the more stamps, the more cancellations—and the more salaries.

The House Post Office Committee, in any event, has approved a law making it illegal for postmasters to mail bricks to their own post offices.

The measure was recommended by the Post Office Department a few days before Postmaster General James A. Farley and a few other Democratic stalwarts had an accident which made them forget brickbats momentarily and think of the hereafter.

Farley, Ambrose O'Connell, his executive assistant; Will Bill Lyons, his administrative assistant; Bill Bray, his private secretary, and Senator O'Mahoney, Democrat, Wyoming, strolled into Farley's private elevator (similar to the one Miss Perkins disowned).

These five officials counted up to more than 1,000 pounds of Democrats, too much for the elevator to stand. It plummeted downward and banged into the cellar floor, where it stayed for thirty minutes.

After the Democrats recovered from their fright somewhat, they began to shout for help. As a matter of fact, said a guard:

"They yelled their heads off."

Twelve Little Words

RETURN of Samuel Insull to Chicago nearly ruined the dignity of the State Department, strained relations between the United States and Greece, caused rumors of war between the latter nation and Turkey—and recalled to the memory of the writer an incident which Insull himself probably will remember to his dying day.

The year was 1931. The scene was the banquet of the Chicago Stock Exchange in the grand ballroom of the Stevens Hotel on Michigan Boulevard.

Your Washington correspondent was a Chicago newspaperman then and Samuel Insull was overlord of the whole Middle West, Midas of the electric power lines and patron of grand opera. He was guest of honor at the banquet.

An impressive figure he was. After the waiters had passed around the electrically-lighted ice cream, the blue-white spotlight was turned on Insull. The diamond buttons on his dress waistcoat glistened like six flash lamps. His white hair looked like snow. His blue eyes sparkled behind pince-nez glasses as he related in a hearty voice the story of his struggle from London slums to American wealth. Finally he came to the high point of his address. The richest men in Chicago waited silently while the richest of them all paused a moment before saying:

"Gentlemen, the first million was the hardest. After that it was easy!"

My Chicago spy reports that when detectives escorted Insull from the train this Summer as a fugitive from justice, a broken and penniless old man, he was whisked past the Stevens Hotel on the way to the Federal Building.

"Insull was seen to look momentarily at the hotel," wrote my spy, "and then turn his head away—as if he'd seen a ghost."

He had. I'm sure of it.

Before Dawn

(Continued from page 43)

"Back to Ireton's apartment."

"There? ... But why?"

"To help you find those letters."

HARRELL kept Albertine at his side when he went to the basement of Ireton's apartment house and threw a switch disconnecting the temporary burglar alarm system. Together they rose above.

"The information was flashed the instant you entered the apartment," Harrell told the girl. "The place is alive with wires."

"Is it that serious? Why?"

He gave her a slow look. "Serious? Sister, its deadly! The police are going to get back that golden crown or gang somebody to death for making fools of them."

She looked blank, and he went on sarcastically, "I'd forgotten that you were a stranger in town, my dear. It's quite a story. It goes back a few centuries to the House of the Medici in its big days. I've been in Florence and I've seen the remains they left, so I can appreciate the excitement this has caused."

"It's a gorgeous thing, designed by the Pope himself, with the points all extending outward like the Oriental crowns, and a jeweled Florentine lily between each two points. In the front is a single large red lily made of rubies, one of them big as a walnut. Fergus Glendenning went after it like a house afire, and when he brought it home it was the richest thing in all his glittering collection."

"It was real gold? And real jewels?"

"Real and flawless and actually priceless by every test. Nobody but a Medici would ever be so lavish. It would bring a real fortune just broken up for junk. I don't know a better proof of its origin than that."

Albertine sighed enviously. "Imagine being that rich! And this Ireton actually stole it?"

"So I've been told. The cops seem satisfied. They're quite indignant about it."

Albertine was wary and none too certain of things as they let themselves into the apartment with the key Harrell had obtained from the police. She stood in the center of the living room looking about curiously at the luxurious furnishings.

"He must have a lot of money."

"He has ways of getting it, certainly," said Harrell, studying her with a kind of wryness in his gaze. "Robbery—kidnaping—blackmail. . . And now you want to try and find those letters?"

"Terribly."

"Then we'll look for them."

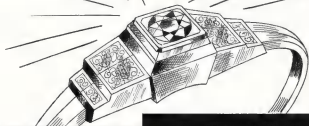
THERE was an avidity about Albertine's air of absorption as she went to work. She had been interrupted in this task; she simply resumed it. She had already skimmed over the more obvious places, she said—the secretary in the living room, the few book shelves, the various closets—and she put her shrewd little brain to work ferreting out the more secret places likely to conceal valuables.

"I'm positive they're here somewhere," she told Harrell. "And if they're here, I'll find them."

Harrell left her and explored the apartment. It was a comfortable home, (Please turn to page 78)

WIN A GENUINE

DIAMOND RING!



Its brilliance is the nearest thing to Diamond Nail Enamel

Write the Best Last Line for a Simple Limerick

Here's your chance to win a valuable Diamond Ring! . . . A beautiful blue-white stone . . . nearly half a carat in size . . . set in 18-carat white gold.

To be eligible for this wonderful prize, just write the last line of a simple limerick. Anybody can do it!

You get the limerick, rules and entry blank free—at the better ten-cent stores, where Diamond Nail Enamel is sold.

And the best last line written and submitted by August 1, 1934, wins the Diamond Ring Prize!

Try your hand at it! Everybody will . . . it's a lot of fun!

Diamond Nail Enamel comes in both Creme and Transparent form. In 4 smart shades:—Crimson, Cherry,



Diamond Creme Polish will not dry the nails. It goes on evenly, without streaking. Covers nail blemishes. Gives brighter lustre and longer wear.

Medium and Natural. Only 10¢ for generous-sized bottle, including metal-shaft brush that can't come loose from cap.

Get one or more bottles tomorrow. Ask for limerick, rules and entry blank, and enter this thrilling contest immediately!

HERE'S A SAMPLE LIMERICK!

Diamond Nail Enamel turned a Miss Bright

To a raving success overnight—

Her nail tips were glorious

They made her so victorious,

That she quickly roped in "Mr. Right."



Dr. J. Parker Pray, Inc., New York City, N. Y.

(No—not to
the Beach
YOU Wouldn't
Dare Go!



SHE never made dates to go places during the day. She let him see her only at night. The darkness was romantic, she said; its soft lights intrigued her. Others believed it, but in her own heart she knew the truth. She was sun-shy . . . and for a good reason! The ruthless, revealing light of day told the truth about her skin. It was sallow, coarse, pimply—embarrassing.

• • •
Cosmetics and shadows may conceal complexion faults for a while—but sooner or later the humiliating truth will out. And it's all so unnecessary. You can have a smooth, radiant complexion like the others—and just as many friends and good times. If you don't, it's nobody's fault but your own.

For there is one time-tried aid to skin health and beauty that has proved its value to literally millions of people the world over—Cuticura Soap used along with Cuticura Ointment. Stubborn, seemingly hopeless cases of pimples, eczema and other skin troubles yield to these soothing, gentle, yet highly effective emollients. Start today with this simple, economical Cuticura treatment—and note how your skin begins to look clearer and fresher.

Cuticura Ointment 25c and 50c. Soap 25c at leading Drug and Department Stores. Also at variety stores in 10c size.

FREE! Helpful folder on Cuticura Products for the care of the skin and scalp. Write Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. TM-5, Malden, Mass.



Cuticura
OINTMENT
AND SOAP

. . . Over half a century of success in controlling and healing skin troubles.

Before Dawn

(Continued from page 77)

but a characterless one. This Diamond Jim Ireton was a bird of passage; he lived mostly on the wing, leaving but faint impression of himself who never he alighted. Intimate belongings were few: golf clubs, a few lurid novels, a couple of photographs of women.

Harrell could hear Albertine busy in the bathroom, making a brisk clatter as she turned the place upside down in her search. Harrell opened the rear windows and studied the outside of the building. He roamed about quietly. The place might be characterless, but it was luxuriously outfitted. The pantry was practically a bar, with a store of mellow whiskies and rare liqueurs and all the accessories of wassail. The kitchen, oddly for a bachelor's flat, was well supplied with staples: food crowding the automatic ice box, a shelf loaded with condiments, an electric grinder ready to supply fresh coffee, a flour bin in the kitchen cabinet full to the brim, and carefully smoothed over. Harrell whistled casually as he poked about. He looked into the room where the girl was captured that dawn and examined the clothes closet from which she had made that frightened exit. Presently he joined her, to inquire into her progress.

HE found her standing in perplexity in the middle of the first bedroom, tapping the floor with one small, exasperated foot.

"I've looked," she said. "I've looked everywhere."

"There's nothing here. Not a paper, a memorandum, a letter, anything. He's cleaned the place out."

Harrell smiled a somewhat irrelevant smile. "I've just been trying to figure something out, Albertine, and I'm stumped. I've been trying to figure out how you climbed on a ledge and crawled in a window here when there isn't a ledge anywhere on the building."

"Oh!" . . . It was a cry of dismay, of reproof. The large eyes pleaded. "You won't tell them that, will you? I had to say something."

"Why not the truth? It's a lot safer. You had a key, didn't you?"

She looked miserable and her gaze dropped. "Yes, I had a key."

"Well?"

A mantle of tragedy enveloped her. Her voice was small. "All right, I'll tell. I'll tell you. I didn't want to tell the exact truth. It was approximately right. But I really haven't any sister. The girl I described . . . the girl Jim Ireton threatened with ruin . . . that was me."

"Still care for him?"
"Hated him from the start. I loathe him! I could kill him, I hate him so."

Harrell drew a small automatic pistol from his pocket and turned it over in his hand. "Is that why you brought this thing along?"

"Where did you get that?" she demanded. She was shocked, genuinely frightened.

In the pocket of a coat hanging up in that closet where they found you

hiding. You were wise to get rid of that gun before surrendering to Inspector Ferrand. He was in a bad mood this morning."

Terror was in her face as she flung herself at Harrell, anguished and beseeching. "Don't put me into that man's hand again! I'd never stand a chance. He wants to get even with me for his disappointment that I wasn't Ireton. He told me he'd crucify me, and he will."

"If that's his job according to his lights, I can't very well stop him."

She wailed in mortal fear, hiding her face against Harrell's stiff breast, clutching with her hands at his shoulders as a beguiling child might cling to a stalwart elder who holds all fate in his hands. "But what have I done to deserve punishment? Heavens, I've been punished enough! I didn't know the kind of a man Jim Ireton was. I thought I loved him. I've been crazy and desperate trying to save myself from him. Why should the police help him instead of helping me?"

Harrell's hands gripped her small shoulders. They were so fragile in his grasp; her little rounded body was so tender and soft and so potent in its appeal. The abjectness of her plea was unnerving. Harrell's mouth was a thin line, but the veins in his temple pulsed.

"You're a swell little actress, Albertine," he said. "You're one of the fastest liars I've ever met."

She wilted a little, but continued to meet his eye, opaquely.

"I'm simply . . . that was it you found in the bathroom?"

Something in the opaque deep eyes snapped, incredulous, overwhelmed with horror. "Oh . . . that's not so. You didn't see me . . ."

"I most assuredly saw you. I was watching in the mirror in the other bedroom when you opened that false panel in the back of the medicine cabinet. What was in the packet you took out?"

"The letters," she gasped. "I found them. I wanted to destroy them. Nobody must see them."

"I'll see them—right now."

She broke suddenly from his grasp and backed across the room. Defiance flamed in her; her pretty face was unflinched now, transfixed by a trapped fury and hatred. "You can't see them! I won't give them to you!"

He came forward quickly, cutting off escape and pocketing her in a corner of the room. He was grim, implacable.

"Where's the packet? You've got it on you. Give it up, or I'll take it by force."

Her face flamed with reluctant shame. "You wouldn't dare! You couldn't . . ."

"I'll repeat for you," he said. "Give it up—or I'll strip every stitch from you to find it."

For an instant there was a silence, a tense, explosive stillness in which their wills struggled in deadlock. Mark Harrell's face was the terrible grimness of the calm man in wrath. Albertine's shoulders rocked a little in despair—then with a sob she suddenly turned her back and reached inside her clothing and drew from its hiding place a manila envelope. She threw it at Harrell and crumpled to the floor in passionate tears.

Harrell flipped open the envelope. He stared uncomprehendingly. Inside

Before Dawn

was a sheaf of crisp new banknotes in the \$100 denomination. There were one hundred of them—\$10,000 in cash!

"What in thunder," Harrell said, nonplussed, "is this?"

Albertine spat a terse and quite unladylike expletive at him in the midst of her sobs. The futile, angry absurdity of that released something in Harrell. He suddenly laughed. He sat down in a chair and laughed in a kind of grim and cosmic mirth.

Albertine abruptly quieted. Presently she asked in a low tone, "What are you going to do with me now?"

He looked at her. "Well, I can turn you back to Farrand . . ."

She glanced at him through the glistening tears.

"Or," he finished, "I can turn you loose."

She got up, dried her eyes quickly, and came to him. After a brief hesitation, she sat down demurely on a corner of the chair, perched very close to him, and began to twist a button on his coat.

"What good will it do to turn me back to Farrand?"

"I was wondering."

"Will you really let me go?"

"That's up to you, isn't it?"

She was silent. Then she sighed dolorously. "I suppose so . . ."

"Did Ireton send you here?" he asked.

"He did. I came after that money."

"For him?"

"For him. He needed it. You have no idea. He's desperate. The police pressure is terrific; they've hounded him, all these weeks, just frothing at the mouth, driving him out of one corner into another, just barely missing him. He hasn't stirred out of a dirty little room now in nine days. The strain was getting him. So I took this chance."

"Just what is your official standing with Jim Ireton?"

"Oh . . ." She shrugged and gave him a quick look under the long lashes. "We've been . . . pals. He's not so bad."

"Will you turn him in?"

"Well, he'd do the same. I have no illusions." She began to pluck at his coat lapel. "After all, all's fair in love and war and . . . so on."

He grinned. "And where then will I find Jim Ireton?"

"I'll tell you that," she said slowly, deliberately, "on one condition. That money doesn't belong to the police. It belongs to him. Let me have it, and I'll tell you where to find Jim Ireton."

"Huh! That's out," he said flatly.

She pouted, but to no avail. She bleakly gave in before his firm refusal.

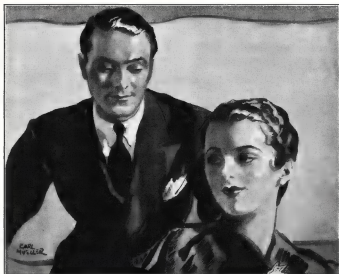
"You're getting off lightly enough," he told her. "The moment Ireton is under arrest, you'll be released."

"All right. I trust you." She gazed at him inscrutably and sent a soft hand creeping along his shoulder. "Whatever you may be, I trust you more than those big mugs of police. You'll be good to me . . . I know you will . . ."

"I will," Ireton quickly took a deep breath and stood up, lifting and setting her firmly on her feet. He grinned. She looked a little chagrined, but then she smiled, standing there gazing at him.

But suddenly a new thought seemed to spring into that nimble little brain. The smile faded. Her eyes reflected unaccountable fright, as of something unexpected, and she shook her head a

(Please turn to page 80)



Why the Writer of this ad suddenly took a New Interest in his wife!

BEING MARRIED to an ad-writer sometimes makes a woman skeptical about certain advertised products and their merits. I found this to be true in my case for my wife did not usually believe in the things I advocated.

But, she DID try the famous LINIT Beauty Bath, and she DID send in the LINIT package top (and 10¢) for an attractive lipstick, 50¢ value.

I know she enjoyed the LINIT Baths because her skin is more soft and smooth than ever before. I also know she was delighted with the lipstick because of my comments on how it improved her appearance. And naturally, she is pleased at the new interest and attention I have shown in her since then.

Signed *Geo. H. Gunder*



LINIT is sold by
grocers and department
stores.



CORN PRODUCTS REFINING COMPANY, Dept. TM-6,
P. O. Box 171, Tinley Station, New York City

Please send me.....lipstick(s). Shade(s) as checked below. I enclose.....\$ and.....LINIT package tops.

☐ Light ☐ Medium ☐ Dark

Name

Address

City State

THIS OFFER
good in U. S. A.
only and expires
Sept. 1, 1934

KOOL

MILDLY MENTHOLATED
CIGARETTES



A MOST REFRESHING SMOKE

*like a downstream paddle . . .
like a breeze from the sea . . .
like a shower on a dusty day . . .
like a tall, tinkling drink . . .*

KOOLs are definitely refreshing. They're mildly mentholated to cool the smoke, save your throat, and to bring out the full flavor of the choice tobaccos used. Cork tips—easy on lips. Coupons packed with KOOLs good for gilt-edged Congress Quality U. S. Playing Cards; other nationally advertised merchandise. (Offer good in U. S. A. only.) Send for illustrated list.

FREE HANDSOME GIFTS...



Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., Louisville, Ky.

Before Dawn

(Continued from page 79)

little in a protesting, appalled anxiety. "Listen!" she said, and came to Harrell quickly. She clutched his coat lapels; immediately she let go and gripped his shoulders.

"You don't . . . you don't think I'd sell out Jim just for the money? You don't think I'm a little rat for doing this?"

Harrell was dubious. "Well . . . all's fair, you said. You tried to drive a bargain."

"But . . ."
She did not finish. She stood there, close to him, silent, the violet eyes opaque and hypnotic.

Harrell was mystified and touched with sudden unaccountable alarm. He heard or perhaps felt a presence behind him, but too late. A hard, grim pressure was driven sharply into the small of his back and a voice snarled: "Freeze, you . . ."

Harrell froze. Albertine sprang away from him; she was like an aroused, spitting feline.

"Careful, Jim!" she cried. "He's a copper. Take his gun away from him." Harrell, still and cold as death, felt the man's hand reach to his belt and jerk the automatic from its holster. The hand gripped his shoulder and spun him bodily around. A heavy, strong face with jowls and deep lines marring the once handsome features stared balefully into his own.

"So it's you that was keeping her!" Ireton snarled. "I waited for you. I waited, but I couldn't wait any longer. So I came up to find out. And you're the guy that's going to arrest Jim Ireton!"

"Never mind him, Jim," Albertine said breathlessly. "God's sake, let's get out of here!" She clutched his arm. Ireton flung her aside. "I'll get out of here when I find out what's been going on." There was a madness in the man's bloodshot eyes; the twin flames of fear and treachery had burned him to the core. "I heard enough to want to know more!"

She was aghast. "About what, Jim?" "About turning me in, by Judas! About selling me out for the ten grand. I creep up the stairs and slide in here on the quiet and find you alone with your arms around this mug, talking about turning me in!"

"Jim!" she said desperately. "You're out of your mind. Ask him. He'll tell you. I've been playing them all for suckers, for hours."

"You told him you'd turn me in!" "Certainly!" she flamed. "What else. I'd send the whole Department on a wild-goose chase. Haven't I done as much before?"

But Ireton was beyond reason. He stood over her, a big, brutally handsome creature, reckless and uncontrollable. He did not know what to believe, and went berserk. Mark Harrell, who knew even less what to believe, standing rigid in the center of the room, knew the measure of his terrible mood.

The girl suddenly screamed and recoiled from the quick blow of Ireton's hand. She sprang away and snatched up a heavy metal vase from a low coffee table.

"Hit me again and I'll brain you, Jim!" she cried frantically. "I've got to. I've stood for your jealousy and tantrums. I can't now. There's prison for both of us in this, Jim. . . ."

What happened seemed quicker than

a lightning flash. Ireton charged, his fist raised for a vicious backhand blow. Albertine swung the vase in ultimate desperation. Ireton realized her determination too late, and the weapon struck him a glancing blow on the head.

Ireton reeled under the impact and stumbled backwards over the coffee table. He fell solidly to the floor. But instantly like a cat he whirled about, leaning on one elbow, and he was no longer the least sane. He brought the gun to bear, leveled on the girl.

Albertine screamed.
There was a shot. An unaccountable shot. It came from Mark Harrell. In Harrell's hand was a small automatic—the automatic he had found in the closet and confiscated and dropped forgotten into a pocket.

And Jim Ireton, with a small ugly hole in his temple, slumped on the floor in the silent blind collapse of instant death.

The fugitive had found at last the final grimmest refuge.

It was an unnerving moment that followed. Albertine Beaudry took this tragic, stunning turn in a way Harrell could neither expect nor immediately account for. She stood immobile, almost senseless of expression, her big, staring eyes blank. Harrell retrieved his pistol and took the gun from the dead man's hand, and then stepped quickly to her. She did not see him. He was grim with the passion of sudden death.

"Albertine! Snap out of it. You've got to save yourself now."

"Save myself?" she repeated. She passed a hand over her dazed face as if to brush something away. "He's dead. . . ."

"I had to. It came too fast."

She pushed him aside, mechanically and with a touch to the body. She stood over it, looking at it blankly for a moment. Then she turned away. She gazed at Harrell, and for an instant something like hatred flashed into being in the depths of her large eyes, only to be replaced by a stunned, numb apathy. She walked across the room and picked up her purse from a chair. She did not know what to do next; she looked like a child helplessly waiting to be told.

Harrell went to her and took her arm. "Listen to me carefully, Albertine. Something's happened. Something's ended. You have no police record; you're no criminal—leave this behind you and close a door between."

"I have no record," she repeated. "No. But, oh—what do I care? He's gone . . ."

"You cared for him?"

"Do you think for anything else?"

He was silenced. But he managed, "You've got to go. Here. This money is as much yours now as anyone's. It's certainly not mine. Take it and buy a long railroad ticket and don't come back." He pressed the manila envelope into her hand.

She looked at it, startled to awareness. She flashed an incredulous look into his face. The stunned numbness slowly vanished in her eyes. All of a sudden she broke into passionate tears and threw herself on Harrell's breast.

Harrell tried curly to comfort her, to urge her to quit.

"Oh, I'll go," she wept. "But let me cry. Let me just once. I'll never again in my life . . ."

Before Dawn

Harrell let her cry, and his own lean face was bleak.

There was no time for the luxury of grief. In a little while Harrell forced her out the door. She went, aware of the inexorable destiny that had her in hand, without protest.

"Just this," she said in the doorway, suddenly pleading. "Just one last word. You are good. I want you to know I meant that. I could ever wish . . ."

"Yes, I know," he said quickly. He caught his breath. "That's just one of the breaks life deals out, every now and then. Better luck next deal, child."

He watched her small forlorn figure walk mutely down the hall, alone . . .

Back in the apartment Harrell went to the telephone. He dialed a number and spoke. Then, "Inspector Farrand? This is Harrell. I want to report the escape of my prisoner . . ."

There was a moment while the receiver crackled like a thing gone mad. Harrell smiled dryly, wanly, and broke in, "But hold on! Let me finish. I also want to report that I've got Iretion here, dead. Yes, stone dead. And that we've recovered the Medici Crown. Yes, I found it myself . . . in the bottom of a flour bin in the man's own kitchen cabinet, carefully covered over, undamaged and all ready for return to the owner. Right you are. I'll be here."

Harrell carefully replaced the receiver on its cradle and somberly waited for the Department to come and reclaim its zealously guarded honor and good name.

I Go Sleuthing

(Continued from page 13)

of the hen's owner now seemed to be directed at myself, but thought she was scolding Spot, and paid little attention as she came flying toward us. She reached me with a sound whack on the head a second later, but not before I had seen carefully woven back and forth on that Plymouth Rock hen's wing some black thread which held a bill in place underneath the wing. I shouted to my uncle, holding the excited hen above my head as the angry old negress divided her efforts between trying to grab the hen and beating me with her fists. When I shouted my discovery above the uproar, he immediately subdued the woman with a few words, and cautioned me to quiet the chicken holding the evidence and bring her along to the police court.

There was a great deal of back-slapping and generous praise from his particular buddies at the station, and I felt that I had qualified as a second Sherlock Holmes indeed. Imagine my disappointment the next morning when my uncle sheepishly brought in the morning paper with a paragraph in it praising him for his clever work in breaking down the thief's persistent denial and discovering the evidence with which to convict her. After a man to man talk with him, however, in which he explained what it meant to him and his career, I took it with more grace, although I was still disappointed when I got on the train to return to the farm with newspaper clippings covering me with glory. I knew I should be afraid to boast about this to my skeptical chums without having any proof.

For contest rules see page 97.

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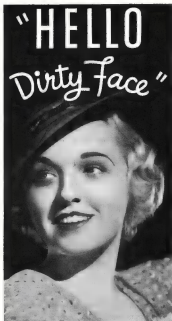
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The Matinee Murder

(Continued from page 55)

man looked as though he were dead. "You'd better go call a doctor right—wait a minute. My God!" Kingsley was staring at Joe's uniform where, near the collar, a telltale spot stained the light blue cloth. "That's blood!"

The manager stooped again over the unconscious man, running a hand around his head, then straightened, his eyes fastened upon his fingers, where that same curious stain appeared.

"He's dead, all right. Worse, it looks pretty much as though he'd been shot, or stabbed!"

"SURE, we'll try to keep ourselves as inconspicuous as possible," Sergeant Lake of the Homicide Squad assured the manager. "I know all about this hurting your business; but after all, murder's been done and we have to act accordingly."

"Murder!" echoed young Duncan Collier, the assistant manager.

"Yes, murder," repeated Lake. "But at that, even if a silencer was used, I can't understand how the sound wasn't heard and some commotion started."

"That's easy," offered Kingsley grimly. "We're playing a feature called 'The Crowd Roars,' an auto racing picture, and there are several scenes where you could probably fire a dozen shots, silencer or no silencer, and no one in the audience would even notice it. How long do you think you'll keep the theater closed?"

"I can't say right now," replied Lake. "Some of my men are up there checking up on the people. We can possibly eliminate quite a few, but this is going to be a nasty job, I'm afraid. I wish I knew just how many people were in there watching the show."

"I can tell you that, easily," said Kingsley. "I suppose the cashier's left his box, Duncan?"

"Yes, sir," answered Collier. "When the theater was closed, I asked her to wait."

"All right. Run out then, will you, and get the figures?"

Lake tugged at his short, stiff mustache, as they waited.

"Two of my best men, Graves and Johnson, are going over your audience," he said. "They're trying to see if they can't separate the possibilities from the impossibilities. I expect their report shortly."

"Hello, Doc," he said as the office door opened and an elderly man with a self-explanatory black bag stepped in. "What's the verdict?"

"In plain terms, death from a shot through the head," the doctor returned crisply. "It was fired, I should say, from about an even level and very close. Death was practically instantaneous and he hasn't been dead longer than an hour, at most. Half of that, I'd say, at a rough guess. If you don't need me any more, I'll run along. The wagon will be here any minute. When you've finished with him, you can send him away. So long."

Kingsley watched him bleakly as he bustled out and then turned to Sergeant Lake with a helpless shrug. He started as the door opened again but relaxed when he saw it was only Duncan.

"Well, how many?" he asked.

"There were seventy-nine people in the theater, Mr. Kingsley," said the assistant.

"Good Lord," groaned Kingsley.

"Seventy-nine suspects!"

"More than that," muttered Lake morosely. "You forget the people working in the theater itself."

"You don't mean any one of my crew?" protested Kingsley hotly.

"Why not?" shrugged Lake. "We don't know a darn thing, so far. One guess is as good as another. Just who was in the theater here on duty?"

Kingsley considered a moment. "Betty Wayne, the cashier," he began, "two operators in the booth, the doorman who takes the tickets, five ushers on the main floor (the balcony is closed except on Saturdays and Sundays), a maid in the downstairs ladies' room and the colored porter. That's all, besides Duncan Collier and myself."

Lake looked from the young, anxious face of Collier to the slightly older but no less worried face of John Kingsley and shook his head in sympathy.

"It's too bad, I know," he said. "You'll have to make the best of it. Yes, Harrison?" as an officer entered.

"Here are the contents of the pockets of the corpse, sir," he said, putting a heterogeneous collection on the long table that ran down the center of the office.

"Hmmm," Lake was examining the property. "Several letters to Sam Hanklin, addressed to the Schaffer Hotel here, so we'll take it for granted for the moment that that's his name. Quite a bit of money—watch—keys—cigarettes—matches—he turned over the objects, apparently thinking aloud as he murmured to himself. "Just about what nine out of ten men would have in their pockets." He opened a leather case. "Guess he's Sam Hanklin, all right. Here's a New York driving license made out in that name. Well, that's that."

"You collect the lot and label them," he said to Harrison.

"Now, to get back to our discussion," He turned to Kingsley again. "You were telling me about the employees. I suppose the cashier couldn't have left her booth?"

"Impossible," Kingsley assured him. "O. K. First elimination. The operators?"

"The two men remain in the booth until their relief comes on."

"Good. How about the doorman?"

"He never leaves his post without a relief, either," said Kingsley. "I can soon find out if he did or did not this morning, and also, if any of the ushers were off the floor for any length of time. As for Duncan and myself, we've been in this office ever since the theater opened, going over the plans for our new picture next week. You'll have to ask our word about each other for that."

"Unless I can't find any one else to pin it on, I will," smiled Lake. "You might find out about the doorman and ushers now, if you will."

"Surely. Duncan, run upstairs and check them, will you?"

As young Collier left the office, Officer Harrison entered again, an ominous object protruding from the handkerchief he carried in his hand.

"We found it on the floor, sir," he said. "It was several rows down from where the man sat. Could have been kicked along, of course."

Kingsley watched curiously as Lake examined the gun.

"Just as I thought," murmured the sergeant, "a silencer. This sure is a

The Matinee Murder

queer case. I've watched plenty of murders on the screen, but this is the first time in my experience where one of the audience has been murdered!"

"Mr. Kingsley!"

Both men looked around as Duncan Collier came in, followed by another policeman.

"Yes, Dunc?"

"None of the ushers or the doorman were off duty, sir. Kingsley breathed a sigh of relief. "What did you find, Graves?" Lake asked eagerly of the policeman.

"We've done our best with the checking up, sir," replied the policeman. "As near as we can make out, almost everyone is eliminated. Most of the people sat further down front than the murdered man and most of them are also sure that certain people within their range of vision didn't move or change seats while the feature was going on. Several of them came in after the man had been taken out of the auditorium and only ten people were here alone. The rest of them were in parties of two or three or more and out of the ten solos, one of them is an old lady over sixty and the other a man who is so deaf that he was sitting down in the second row all through the show and everybody else is sure he never moved, or they would have noticed it."

"That leaves eight good possibilities, eh?" mused Lake aloud.

"Yes, sir. Three of them are women, but, of course, you can't ever tell."

"Eight sounds better than eighty," sighed Kingsley.

"Yeah, but we may find out it's eighty, after all," grunted the detective. "All right, Graves. Send 'em in, one at a time."

"You might just step into that other office," Lake gestured toward young Collier's room, a smaller office opening off that of Kingsley. "No one will be able to see you and I'd sort of like to have you listening, just in case anything crops up."

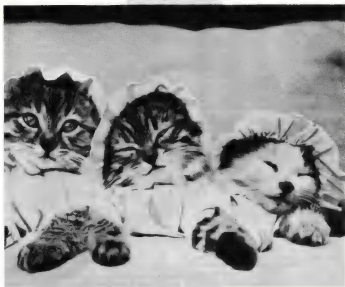
As Kingsley and his assistant left the room, he nodded to Graves to bring in the people. "And you stand there in back of me, Davis," he said to a uniformed bluecoat who had taken a stolid, silent part in all the proceedings. "Keep your eyes glued on their faces and see if you get anything I miss. O. K. Let's go. The women first, Graves."

Kingsley and Collier, waiting in the small office, listened with more than curiosity. But though their ears were strained to catch every word, every inflection, as Lake conducted the questioning, one after another of the eight sounded equally guiltless.

The only break in the regular stories was that of Thomas Lewis, the man who had called the usher to attend to the "sleeping" patron. When the two listeners finally heard Sergeant Lake tell the last man to sit outside in the lounge with the others, they joined him again.

"You heard it all?" When they nodded, Lake granted in disgust. "Didn't get a single thing out of any one of them. Lewis is the only one absolutely clear, for the usher who seated him is sure there wasn't time for him to do it. The rest may all be innocent or guilty—or it may still be one of the other 'eighty' with some one helping the alibi. It may not be a one man job at all. I suppose I'd better go and try my questions on them myself. What a

(Please turn to page 84)



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The Matinee Murder

(Continued from page 83)

nice little job that's going to be!"

"Er—Sergeant Lake—" Kingsley spoke hesitatingly.

"Yes!" The detective turned back to him, one hand already on the knob of the door.

"Please don't think I'm trying to horn into your business, but I have an idea—" Kingsley's voice trailed off into a modest silence.

"Well, come on, let's have it," urged Lake. "I'm willing to listen to any idea in a case like this."

"You do think that the most likely suspects are the eight people you just questioned?" asked Kingsley.

"I do," nodded Lake. "Yet you yourself heard every one of them give me a straight story."

"Yes, that's just it!" Kingsley nodded eagerly. "Now listen!"

Duncan watched the two curiously as his boss drew the detective into his office. They were not absent long. When they returned Lake had a new expression on his face, a combination of amused doubt and hope.

"Graves!" he called. "When the policeman entered, he spoke crisply. 'Send in those eight again, one at a time.'"

To Duncan's disappointment, Lake talked with each of them in the inner office, where Kingsley remained this time, evidently sharing the interview. As each suspect came out, Lake told them to sit down in the large office where they were to wait, under the cold and watchful eye of Officer Davis.

Collier's impatience mounted high when at last all eight of the suspects sitting there and Kingsley and Lake still remained in the adjoining room. The door was closed and he could hear a low hum of conversation, more like a monologue, and surmised that one of the two was talking over the private phone, but when at last Lake did come in, with Kingsley close behind him, he was disappointed to see that nothing happened immediately.

"I'm very sorry to detain you all like this," the detective said gravely. "I'm sure you'll be released definitely in a few moments. I'm just waiting for a message."

Tension grew in that office as Lake paced slowly back and forth. Eight pairs of eyes watched him, eight pairs of eyes lined up in a row along the wall, eyes moving as he did, back and forth, back and forth. A knock at the door made everyone start.

"Come in!" called Lake sharply.

A policeman in uniform entered. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "but we've just come from the hotel where this Hanklin was staying. There was a woman living there with him as his wife and when she heard of the mur-

der, she tried to commit suicide! Her name is Constance Some—"

"Connie!"

The name, like a cry of agony, had burst from some one's lips, from one of the eight sitting so tense against the wall.

"That got you, eh? I thought it would!" Lake nodded grimly at a man who, stark now with the realization that he had convicted himself by his involuntary gasp, was glaring at the policeman who, in obedience to a swift gesture from Lake, now had him in a tight grasp.

"So Hanklin was the man who ran off with your wife a year ago?" Lake spoke tersely, every word like a sharp blow. "You swore you'd get him some day, didn't you, and you kept your word! I didn't really need this to prove it; you gave yourself away inside, and I guess you knew it, but I thought I might as well clinch matters. Some juries are queer, you know. You finally got him, after a year of waiting."

"Yes, I killed him. Why not?" The prisoner's lips writhed defiantly. "Would you let a man come into your home and run off with the only thing you cared for and do nothing about it? I swore he'd pay for it, and he has. I knew I'd be back in town again about this time, and I waited for him, watched him everywhere he went, waiting for a chance. I had the gun ready—I followed him in here to see the picture. When all that noise started on the screen—I was right in back of him—no one was near us—I went forward—and I shudder shook his tense frame and then he sagged in the officers' grip, sobbing."

"Take him away, boys," Lake shrugged and sighed as they left the office.

"Well—" he shook himself slightly, "it's all over. Business as usual, eh, Kingsley? I guess we can leave you now and I hope the publicity you're bound to get won't do any harm. And thanks a lot for your tip. It was a swell idea."

Kingsley grinned self-consciously. "It was a good idea, wasn't it? It worked!"

"I'll say it worked," exploded Duncan enthusiastically. "But what was it?"

"Well," Kingsley grinned again, "they all came through but the guy they caught and Lake clinched that by some tricky phony. You see, I figured that a man who came in to murder some one wouldn't have his mind on much else, so I just suggested that Lake ask everyone of those suspects to tell him the plot of the picture! The rest of the suspects could—and he couldn't! That's all!"

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Terrible Vengeance

(Continued from page 22)

tenements, hovels, and large unbuilt sections. Karl trotted along some hundred feet behind her, amazed at his own temerity, drawn by visions of the vast possibilities of this unknown poison. Already he imagined himself possessed of it. Already Poldi had drunk of it and was dying. His body was dissolving bit by bit, dropping off into yellow waxen drops, like a candle when it gutters. And Poldi was seeing himself dissolve, his hands melting away before his eyes, then his arms and feet, and he was screaming . . . and Karl was there too, looking on and gloating. . . .

So satisfying was this vision that Karl was almost ready to abandon the task that confronted him and go home to pursue his beautiful dream in quiet and peace. Then he remembered his recent illness and his vow that he would see Poldi perish, and doggedly he followed the Princess through the growing darkness.

The palace of the Princess was a wagon standing in a bare lot. The kitchen of the palace was just in front of the wagon and was equipped with an open fire and a kettle hanging over that. The living rooms of the palace were anywhere to the right and to the left, that is to say all the space of the world which to the roaming gypsy is his living room. The wagon evidently was but the place for storing things and for sleeping in, in case of rain. That the location of the palace was but temporary was shown by the presence of two horses who nibbled with disgust at the tufts of coarse grass that grew sparsely out of the red clay of the lot.

A few gypsies, who were about, paid no attention to the arrival of the Princess nor she to them. She led Karl to a little tent where she seated him across from herself at a small deal table and brought his hand for inspection under the light of a smoky oil lamp.

"You are going to be very rich," she prophesied. It was her usual way of beginning. After all one had to feel one's way and wait for the subject to show signs of interest, then one knew that one was on the right road.

"Really?" said Karl his mind still wondering how he was to get the drif. "Someone very close to you is going to die."

"Are you sure?" said Karl, his interest aroused.

"I see very much danger for you, too," Stella pursued mysteriously.

"What kind of danger?" Karl asked, his interest now definitely caught.

Stella looked up. Had she struck the right note so soon? "For ten shillings," she suggested, "I can show you the face of your greatest enemy." She had expected to have to haggle with her customer, but to her surprise he agreed at once. Whereupon she filled a cup with water and from the drawer of the table produced a large spoon filled with lead shavings. These she melted above the flame of the kerosene lamp.

Suddenly, she dropped the molten lead into the cold water. "Now you shall see the likeness of your greatest enemy," and she fished out the solidified mass from the bottom of the cup.

"This man will lead you to certain ruin," she said, "unless you take every (Please turn to page 86)



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The smart Parisienne has long practiced the subtle art of the correct use of perfume. She chooses her perfume for its effect, for its ability to make her truly irresistible. But no longer need you envy her choice, for now with Irresistible Perfume, you can give yourself that indefinable charm, that unforgettable allure that has attracted men the world over. You will find Irresistible Perfume at your 5 and 10c store. Buy it today. One trial will convince you that it has the magic power to make you, too, more irresistible.

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FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

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WHAT grocery clerk has given you the most HELPFUL SERVICE?



**\$1,000
IN CASH**
—See Page 10—

GETTING friendly, helpful service from grocery store clerks is just as everyday an event as turning on the electric lights. Yet try to get along without either! Every woman has had a special reason to appreciate her grocer.

What grocery clerk has given you the most helpful service? For the best letters answering that question, Tower Magazines are paying \$1,000.00 in cash. See pages 10 and 11 of this magazine for details how you can share in these cash awards and bring fame to a local grocery store man or woman.

Terrible Vengeance

(Continued from page 85)

precaution. We gypsies can help you. Do you recognize your enemy?"

Karl was turning the piece of natural sculpture this way and that and for the life of him could not recognize any sort of face at all, particularly not that of Foldi, which he had hoped to see, until suddenly, looking at it from one angle, he caught all the features of his own emaciated face. Startled he dropped the piece of lead.

"You recognize him," Stella cried with delight. Such luck was rarely her's. "He is your greatest enemy. He will lead you to your destruction. Beware of him!"

Karl's cigarette drooped from his ashen lips. His corded hands covered with liver-spots wrung with each other. He shivered. "Enough of that," he said, his dry mouth ejecting words with some effort.

"There are other things I can do," the Princess suggested quickly. "I can find hidden treasure. Just think, the earth under our feet is full of caches of gold and jewels concealed there by the peoples of olden times."

"Could you get me some *dri*?" Karl asked timidly.

The effect of these few words on Stella's features was amazing. Her lower jaw fell open suddenly as if loosened at its hinges and she stared out thus with gaping mouth without uttering a word. Just as suddenly she recovered herself, blinked and snapped her mouth shut.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I asked you if you could get me some *dri*?" Karl repeated, but now he said it not timidly, but incisively, for now he knew that there was such a thing as *dri* and he knew too that it was a terrible thing. No other explanation would fit the rapid changes of expression that he had observed on Stella's face.

"What is *dri*?" the Princess asked innocently.

Karl did not answer her question, instead he proposed: "I will give you a hundred shillings for some."

Beneath her dark olive skin Princess Stella blanched.

"A hundred shillings?" she repeated. Then she pulled herself together: "But what is this . . . this *dri*? Where can I get some?"

At this moment a witch-like brown and wrinkled visage surrounded by rebellious wisps of unkempt gray hair poked itself into the tent and exchanged rapid words with Stella. The latter rose and swept out of the tent so that Karl was left alone there with nothing but the little deal table and the dismal kerosene lamp.

He did not find this at all congenial to be left alone just when he had felt himself on the verge of grasping the coveted prize. What could this *dri* be like anyway, he asked himself. Stella knew of it, of that there could be no doubt. Perhaps she had gone off to get some, in the company of that witch-like person?

Karl's heart pounded wildly. Whatever was keeping her so long? Just then she brushed into the tent, obviously intensely irritated. "Oh!" she said as if surprised to find Karl there. But he burst out:

"Did you get me some?"

"Some what?" Stella asked angrily.

"Some *dri*, of course."

"*Dri*," snorted Stella with disgust. "Don't talk to me about *dri*. My father just died."

Karl was stricken. "I'm awfully sorry," he said. "I guess I'd better be going. You must feel terrible losing your father."

"It isn't that," Stella said curtly. "But he left my three brothers each ten thousand shillings. And he left me nothing! Although he had plenty more when he died. And she began to relate how King Rom had had all his money dug up from its hiding place and placed in his hands when he began to feel his end approaching. And he had distributed each of his three sons this sum. The rest he wished to take with him to spiritland, and he held his money tightly in his hand and so died taking it with him. For he knew well that no gypsy would dare touch the property of a dead man for fear of his ghost."

To Karl the matter seemed very simple indeed: "Why don't you just take it away from him now that he's dead?"

"Take it away from him?" Stella exclaimed. "So that his spirit should come back to me at night when I'm asleep and pull at my hair? Oh, no, I couldn't stand that." She shuddered. Then suddenly she asked: "You've been to school. You know things. Tell me, do the dead return?"

"I thought you gypsy fortune-tellers knew more about the mysteries of life than we," Karl replied. Then an idea struck him, a marvelous idea. "Of course there might be a way to test him, to see if he would come back."

"What do you mean," Stella asked hurriedly.

"I mean," said Karl calmly, feeling very sure of himself now. "I mean that I might be able to arrange things so that if he didn't come back you'd have the money and all would be well. And if he did come back, why he'd have his money."

Stella was puzzled. "How could you do that?"

"Easily," said Karl. "Only what would you give me in return for showing you how? How much money has your father in his hands?"

"Thirty-three thousand shillings."

"Phew! A neat sum. Well and what do you think if I made it possible for you to take that immense sum of money without fear?"

With a rapid undulating motion Stella rose and brought her body in close contact to Karl's. "Anything," she whispered.

Karl felt his pulses quicken. The girl was very beautiful, very voluptuous.

"I want some *dri*," he said hoarsely. Stella's body moved warmly, gently, close to him. She murmured: "Are you sure you can make it so that my father's ghost won't haunt me?"

"Yes."

Stella's arms were around his neck, warm lips on his. You shall have the *dri*," her voice promised. Her eyes promised more. "I can't make it myself, because my people would kill me if they discovered that I had made it. It's too terrible! But I will tell you how to make some for yourself."

"Is that a promise?" Stella nodded.

"Very well then. I'll keep my part of

Terrible Vengeance

it first. You gypsies keep your money on your person or hide it away somewhere, but you know how we take care of ours, don't you?"

"You mean you put it in banks?"

"Yes. And you know how we can draw it out in checks?"

"I know; a woman once gave a check for telling her fortune."

"Very well then. Now supposing I make out a check for thirty-three thousand shillings and give it to your father in place of the money he now has in his hands. Then if his spirit returns and wants his money then all he need do is go to the nearest bank and cash my check. And of course if he doesn't return, so much the better . . . In any case the money is yours!"

"I think I see . . ." Stella said, a queer smile beginning to illumine her face. Then she clapped her hands. "That's it! Of course. If King Rom comes back let him go to the bank and get his money!"

She disengaged herself, and rushed out of the tent to return in a second with a dark surly-looking fellow who bore over his shoulder a spade with a sinister smear of freshly turned earth on it. The gypsies do not wait long to bury their dead. They are too afraid of ghosts.

Stella and her friend conversed rapidly in a mixture of gypsy and Viennese dialect, then Stella said: "Michael says we must do it at once, because they are going to bury my father soon."

"Very well," said Karl and he drew forth his check book and his fountain pen and wrote out the biggest check he had ever drawn, and far greater than his bank would ever honor. Michael put out his dirty hand and snatched it. "That good check?" he asked in his heavy coarse speech, his permanent scowl puckering up into an ugly leer as he strove to decipher the words.

"King Rom will be able to cash it all right," Karl laughed. "Don't you worry about that!"

"Come, come," Stella urged, tugging at Karl's sleeve. "There's no time to be lost."

The trio left the tent and entered the wagon. There on a cot and covered by a bit of gaudy calico, none too clean, lay the body of the King, all alone, with none to mourn him, for in the first place gypsies do not mourn their dead. Some clans even rejoice at funerals, and in the second place the dead are regarded with such superstitious fears that it is as much as they can do to summon the courage to bury them.

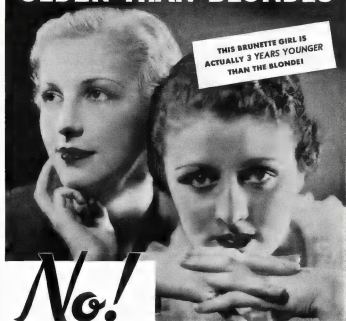
"Quick now while no one is here," Stella whispered, hanging back near the door but pushing Karl toward the cot.

Karl overcame a wave of revulsion born of a sudden horrid image; he saw King Rom leaping up with a scream to protect his money and crying out: "I don't want to cash your check, it's no good."

"Well, it's for a worthy cause," Karl said to himself and stepped up to the cot; and since he had no wish to look into the face of King Rom while he robbed him of his money, he folded back the flowered material from the feet-end up until he had exposed the lower part of the body up to his hands.

King Rom's brown and sore fingers readily yielded their hold on the bills. (Please turn to page 88)

DO BRUNETTES LOOK OLDER THAN BLONDES



THIS BRUNETTE GIRL IS
ACTUALLY 3 YEARS YOUNGER
THAN THE BLONDE!

No!

THE ANSWER IS THAT 7 OUT OF 10 BRUNETTES USE THE WRONG SHADE OF FACE POWDER!

• BY *Lady Esther*

If there's one thing women fool themselves about, it's a face powder shades.

Many women select face powder tints on the wrong basis altogether. They try to get a face powder that simply matches their type instead of one that enhances or flatters it.

Any actress will tell you that certain stage lights can make you look older or younger. The same holds true for face powder shades. One shade can make you look ten to twenty years older while another can make you look years younger.

It's a common saying that brunettes look older than blondes. There is no truth in it. The reason for the statement is that many brunettes make a mistake in the shade of the face powder they use. They simply choose a brunette face powder shade or one that merely matches their type instead of one that goes with the tone of their skin. A girl may be a brunette and still have an olive or white skin.

One of Five Shades is the Right Shade!

Colorists will tell you that the idea of numberless shades of face powder is all wrong. They will tell you that one of five shades will answer every tone of skin.

I make Lady Esther Face Powder in five shades only, when I could just as well make ten or twenty-five shades. But I know that five are all that are necessary and I know that one of these five will prove just the right shade of face powder for your skin.

I want you to find out if you are using the right shade of face powder for your skin. I want you to find out if the shade you are using is making you look older or younger.

One Way to Tell!

There is only one way to find out and this is to try all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder—and that is what I want you to do as my expense.

One of these shades, you will find, will instantly prove the right shade for you. One will immediately make you look years younger. You won't have to be told that. Your mirror will cry it aloud to you.

Write today for all the five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder that I offer free of charge and obligation. Make the shade test before your mirror. Notice how instantly the right shade tells itself. Mark, too, how soft and smooth my face powder; also, how long it clings.

Mail Coupon

One test will reveal that Lady Esther Face Powder is a unique face powder, unparalleled by anything in face powders you have ever known. Mail the coupon or a letter today for the free supply of all five shades that I offer.

(You can paste this on a penny postcard)

FREE

LADY ESTHER
3029 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Ill.

Please send me by return mail a trial supply of all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder.

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Address _____

City _____ State _____

This offer is not good in Canada.

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Amazing New Discovery For Light Hair Perfected!

An almost magical way has been found to increase and intensify the special allure of the Blonde Girl. To enable you to attract as never before, if you're blonde... with the golden shimmer of your hair!

Science has found a way to marvelously enhance the beauty and fascination of light hair. Even when it is dull and faded-looking, to restore its real blonde color and lustre!

No matter how lovely your hair is now, this discovery will make it lovelier... give it a dazzling gloss and sheen... make you a golden magnet of feminine appeal.

Win and Hold Men

It is called Trublond. Try it just once. It is SAFE—not a dye. Simply acts to bring out the natural hidden color, golden light and fluffiness to your hair. And when hair has darkened and become streaked, Trublond quickly brings back its original color and sparkle.

You use it like an ordinary shampoo. Get a package of Trublond—for a few cents at any drug or department store or at the 10c stores. Begin using your blonde charm to the utmost!

TRUBLOND BLONDE SHAMPOO

by Jo-cur
Gives hair golden light... Cleans, smooths and tightens...
No hair falling out... No itching... No harm to hair.



Terrible Vengeance

(Continued from page 87)

Karl quickly pushed the check under King Rom's hands and drew down the shroud. At once Michael's greedy fingers reached out for the money, but Karl handed it past him to Stella who quickly stuffed it into her bosom. Michael gave Karl a black look but Karl paid no attention for Stella had winked to him to follow her out of the wagon, and he guessed that now he was to receive his promised reward.

Together they walked off into the darkness until Stella judged herself safe from spying eyes or ears.

"Dri is a poison which you can mix with a dinner and everyone may eat of the food; but only the one for whom the poison was made will die of it," so Stella began without any preliminaries, compressing her knowledge as if she wished to get through with it in as few words as possible. "And the person for whom it was made, will die of the most horrible death, after months of suffering and shame. I have never seen it used. But I have heard terrible stories told of it. You understand that it is so deadly and so easily administered that we must all agree to kill any person who is caught making it for fear of being the victim. I would not even know how to make it if it had not been for Old Mira who still remembers how it is done and who told me.

"Look, you must take three gold rings and three gold thimbles and you must go into the forest and press these three rings into the ground there where mushrooms grow. Then you must fill the three thimbles with hair and fingernail parings and blood taken from the one you want to die, and these three thimbles you press into the ground within the three rings. Then you wait weeks or even months, until one day you find mushrooms growing in the thimbles, and these mushrooms, when they are ripe will shed a little dust. That dust is dri."

Stella's voice paused. Karl was about to ask her for more information when he suddenly felt her arms about him. She kissed him, kissed again and again, passionately. Karl responded hungrily. It seemed that now that he had made up his mind to act in one direction, life was taking an interest in him in many directions. Stella drew him toward a small tent near the edge of the field. Karl followed her swaying form.

HOURS later, Karl managed to stumble his way back to the Favoriten Gaertel and from there he knew his way home. The adventure of the evening seemed in retrospect like a crazy glorious dream; but as for the making of dri, that was preposterous.

Preposterous or not Karl could not help thinking about it and was forced to admit that in the making of dri there was much that could be called strict science. Why not try it? Though none too diligent in the matter he nevertheless went about preparing himself. He bought the three thimbles, for example, and then from another jeweler he purchased three gold bands.

Since he did not intend to prepare his dri out in the forest, it was necessary to grow mushrooms at home. For this purpose he secured a general handbook on the subject and studied it thoroughly. Instead of a cellar he

constructed a cool stone chamber reproducing the moist cold atmosphere as nearly as possible. Furthermore he purchased a brick of spore of the edible mushroom and the necessary manure on which to grow it. In due time, under his bed, Karl was growing a fine crop of mushrooms.

So far so good, but that was nothing yet. One must fill the thimbles. But how? Where was he to get the hair, the finger-nail parings, the blood? At first this difficulty seemed insurmountable; then Karl realized that this part of it might be as readily solved as all the other prerequisites for the making of dri.

The fact was that within recent months Poldi had been growing increasingly bald. His pink scalp was coming more and more into evidence and he was using all manner of tonics and lotions and mechanical devices that were all guaranteed to overcome the tendency of the human hair to depart some years before its owner. In a dressing room adjoining his office, Poldi had a shelf full of hopes that had failed him.

One day Karl came to the office with a great brush spiked with the heaviest variety of boar's bristle obtainable and presented this truly formidable weapon to Poldi:

"You must try this, Poldi," he said. "There's nothing like it. Use it two or three or even four times a day. Use it vigorously. Don't mind a bit of scratching now and then, or even a little bleeding. That won't hurt. On the contrary. You see you've got to stimulate your scalp to renewed activity."

"Why I've heard that that was the very worst thing to do," said Poldi.

"What did you say? Don't listen to every fool that comes along. Whip up your scalp! Don't pander it with a lot of sweet-smelling concoctions. A ploughed field gives the best harvest you know."

"Sounds logical enough," said Poldi. "Well many thanks, old man, I'll give it a trial."

"Do, by all means," said Karl.

A few days later Karl asked: "How's the brushing doing? Is it showing any results?"

"I can't see anything yet," Poldi confessed, "and I've certainly been using it plenty. Why my scalp is simply raw."

"Fine," said Karl, noting how Poldi's scalp was lacerated. "That's the stuff. If anything works, that will."

Thus encouraged Poldi went at it with a will. Half a dozen times a day he retired into his dressing room to emerge, scratched but hopeful.

The one day Karl stole Poldi's brush for a few hours and was able to garner, in hair, in dandruff and in clogged blood, more than a good thimbleful of petritus. He divided his spoil between two thimbles and stuck them into the soil among the mushrooms of his stone box. Now it was simply a question of waiting.

Morning and night Karl used to pull his box out from under the bed and examine the thimbles. For a while it seemed to him impossible that ever a mushroom should grow there, then suddenly one day, there they were, both thimbles crowded with tiny mushrooms that could not all find a suffi-

Terrible Vengeance

cient amount of room to expand there. No mother ever watched over a baby with half the tenderness Karl expended on his thimble mushrooms. He would have watered them with his tears if that were necessary. But they grow without such aid; flourished, and in time grew ripe and heavy with the dust that is their fruit and seed. This dust Karl gathered with endless care and put it into a bit of paper folded as for a medicinal powder, and this he kept in his breast pocket, impatiently waiting for an opportunity to administer it.

NOW Poldi used to keep a bottle of very special cognac in his office and whenever he had put through an especially fine piece of business he would call in Karl to have a drink with him. And it was into this cognac that Karl managed one evening to spill his powder.

The very following day Poldi called Karl in and declared: "Well, that deal is closed. Come now we'll have a bit of cognac on that." Ceremoniously he poured out two glasses full of his favorite liqueur.

"Not so much for me," cautioned Karl. "You know I can't stand much."

"Ah, come on. Don't be that way, especially now when I feel so good."

"Well, to your health," Karl proposed and sipped a little of his cognac. Poldi drank his in large gobbles and then smacked his lips:

"Ah, that was good. I think I'll have another." And he suited his actions to his words: "How about you, Karl?" But Karl shook his head. "Say you know what?" Poldi suggested. "I'm hungry. What would you say to a nice juicy steak across the street at the Golden Lion? Will you join me, Karl?"

"You know I'm a vegetarian," said Karl severely.

"Ah, come now. A nice tender steak? How could you refuse it? I wouldn't tell any one I saw you eating it."

"Do you think I'm a fake vegetarian," said Karl angrily.

"Now don't get sore. But the thought of a steak, a nice fat steak with a heavy mushroom sauce..." He paused and seemed to be testing the reaction of his mouth to the idea.

"Well, I'll go with you," Karl relented, "and eat your mushrooms."

"Oh, no you won't," Poldi laughed. "I've got a sudden craving for mushrooms. In fact I think I'll order myself a double portion of them."

"You know," said Poldi when they were seated in the restaurant. "What I really wanted all along was mushrooms. I think I'll just have the waiter prepare me a special dish of them. Bother the steak."

This desire for mushrooms manifesting itself so early after the drinking of the *dri* was both surprising and welcome to Karl. And just a trifle frightening too. That *dri* was potent stuff, no doubt about that. He could not resist the pleasure of remaining with Poldi all that evening, and for the first time accepted the latter's invitation to spend a few hours in one of the other of Vienna's pleasant cafes, so as to be able to watch his victim closely and not lose a single symptom of the drug's onslaught.

(Please turn to page 90)

HELEN STOPS A WANDERING EYE



HEXIN STOPS A THROBBING HEADACHE

NOW there is no need to avoid a difficult situation when you feel "below par"—no need to break important engagements on account of ordinary aches and pains.

"2 HEXIN with water" is a magic phrase to people in pain. It means relief in record time and—above all—SAFE relief.

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WON'T cake or rub off!!

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Terrible Vengeance

(Continued from page 89)

"We've been keeping to much to ourselves, you know that, Karl?" Poldi said as they were separating to go to their respective homes. "We've got to go out together more often hereafter."

And Karl was only too willing, in fact there was nothing he wanted more. And the excitement of being with Poldi was enough to endow Karl suddenly with all sorts of social talents that he never suspected himself of possessing. Their evenings now were a round of the merriest of cafes. And Karl's chief delight each night was to observe how Poldi after some hemming and hawing would always come around to ordering mushrooms in one form or another. "Ha-ha," he would laugh, a bit embarrassed, "I don't know but that there's something to be said for vegetarianism, after all."

"One of these days you'll be turning into a mushroom, if you don't watch out," Karl warned jocularly.

ONE evening Poldi said to Karl: "Say, I feel awfully queer around my head. What can it mean do you suppose? My scalp feels kind of . . . well, strained. As if hair were going to grow there again. Yes, that's it! As if I were going to sprout hair. Look, Karl, can you see if my hair is coming back? You know I'm thinking that idea of brushing it the way you said is beginning to show some results."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Karl, "but the fact is that I can't see a thing. But give it a chance."

Late that night after a long and merry evening at the cafes Karl brought Poldi to his handsome apartment and Poldi was so drunk that Karl felt he could not leave him alone, and therefore arranged to spend the night on the living room couch.

Very early in the morning Poldi complained of a splitting headache. "Its good you stayed over, Karl," Poldi moaned. "I think you'll have to get me a doctor. Oh my head, my poor head. It feels as if it were as big as a room."

Karl came to his bedside and stared at Poldi in amazement.

"Oh my head, my poor head," Poldi groaned. "What are you standing there for and looking at me so? Is anything wrong? Why don't you get me a doctor?"

But Karl could do nothing but stand there with eyes and mouth wide open. Poldi felt Karl's stare directed to his head and he put his hands up to his bald scalp. "Why my hair is grown back!" he exclaimed with great joy. Then he felt the growth more attentively with his finger tips. "But it's not hair," he said puzzled. "Karl, for God's sake," he screamed, "what's the matter with me? It feels as if my brain had grooved out!" Horrified at the thought he grasped at his scalp to discover what was there. His hand came away filled with light soft objects unexpectedly strange to the touch. Slowly he brought his hand down to the line of his vision and stared. Then he stared at Karl. Then he stared back at his hand.

"Mushrooms!" he screamed. He looked wildly about the room. "Mushrooms!" He began, frantically, to feel around on his scalp and his fingers encountered a few more that he had

not removed with his first handful. "My God, Karl, they're growing out of my head!" Gingerly he probed around and removed these that remained. With a shuddering moan he cast them away from himself, and fell back on his pillow: "Karl, bring me a glass of water. I feel sick."

Karl went at once to fetch one, but when he returned he found Poldi fast asleep. Karl put down the glass on the night table and bent down on his knees to pick up the mushrooms that had been thrown on the floor. It was plain that they were precisely of that variety of which he had purchased the spore. The whole business for making dri was evidently as rigorously exact as any biological laboratory could have demanded. It merely involved finding a sub-species of mushroom that would grow on the detritus of a human scalp.

When Poldi awoke from his nooze his first words were: "Are you there, Karl? Say, you know I had the most amazingly vivid dream." And he told about the mushrooms that had grown out of his head. And Karl laughed quietly: "Perfectly fantastic!" was his comment. "But really I think you'd better cut down on your consumption of mushrooms. Such dreams are often a warning from the system."

"Ho-ho," Poldi burst out laughing. "What nonsense! Why, right now I have a craving for mushrooms and if you'll go down with me I think I'll step into Seppi's place and have a big dish of creamed mushrooms for breakfast."

But it was not long before Poldi realized that those dreams he was having night after night of getting up in the dark and removing mushrooms that grew on his head were nothing less than the truth. The discovery completely unnerved him. "Why I'm awake," he cried suddenly. "Oh, Karl, I'm awake!" And he wept in Karl's arms like a baby. "Don't leave me alone," he cried. "Don't leave me alone for a moment."

After a few moments he took a calmer view of the matter. "Yes, I guess I did go kind of crazy about mushrooms. And I suppose I got myself infected. Well, I must cut them out. I think I ought to have a doctor in, too." But the doctor who was summoned could do nothing before such a peculiar state of affairs.

"What you need is a specialist," he advised Poldi and himself called upon a good skin man. The latter however, being completely baffled suggested a toxicologist, who in turn called in a specialist in saprophytic and parasitic diseases.

At first Poldi used to remove the mushrooms in the morning and then go to his office. But after a while he found himself unable to do that, for the mushrooms sprouted even during the day. And though he had got in the habit of passing his hand back and forth over his scalp he could never feel quite certain that he might not be caught in public with a button mushroom growing from out of his head. The possibility of such a mortifying event caused him to remain at home thereafter; besides, the manifold treatments he was undergoing upon the advice of his physicians kept him busy all day long.

Poldi therefore delegated Karl to take charge of the business and that

Terrible Vengeance

suited Karl right down to the ground. There he was in command of his own business after so many years during which he had been defrauded of it. Why hadn't he taken his revenge years before?

Since Poldi couldn't do without him Karl practically lived in his apartment. And as a result it began to be a little tiresome, seeing one's victim suffering day after day. At first Karl had relished every second of it, now it was becoming a bit of a bore. Poldi, the big healthy Poldi, proved to be rather a weepy patient, always complaining about one thing or another and fairly slopping over with sentimentality.

One morning he called Karl into his room and spoke somewhat in this fashion: "Do you really mind taking care of me, Karl?"

"Why of course not, Poldi, I do it gladly."

"Now and then I've been under the impression that you were holding something against me."

"Nonsense! Why should I?" Karl protested.

"Well, I don't know, but that was my impression. Besides I did rather barge in on your invention, you know?"

"Oh, I've forgotten that long ago."

"I'm awfully glad to hear you say that, Karl. You've no idea how terrible it is to wake up every morning and have to face this . . . this . . . oh it's awful!" As he spoke he put up his hand to his scalp. "They're there all right," he sighed. He sat up in bed. His once so bulky figure, exhausted from producing crop after crop of mushrooms was now haggard and wasted to half its former size.

IN the office of the Poldi Pump Works, Karl felt better. He had the pleasure of being in command and of executing daily some innovation that erased the figure of Poldi. He had begun by having his own name painted on the door in letters so large that it quite overshadowed the name of the firm. Now he was having the same thing done to the stationery.

There were other forms of compensation too. For example whenever business had been good he would call in the head bookkeeper and pour out a little cognac for himself and the man.

"Excellent cognac, isn't it?" said Karl expansively.

"Excellent indeed, sir," replied the bookkeeper obediently. "And how is Herr Poldi? He will not admit any one to his house."

"I know it," Karl sighed. "I am afraid he's doing very poorly." So life was pleasant with Stella now installed in his new, luxurious apartment, and filling his hours away from the office and Poldi with an ecstasy he had never dreamed existed. Stella grew daily more beautiful and sensual; but best of all seemed to care for Karl.

That afternoon, however, the specialist in saprophytic growths called at the office and begged to speak to Herr Schmidt.

"How is Poldi?" Karl asked at once. The doctor bent his head. Karl sighed. After a moment of votive silence however the doctor spoke up briskly:

"Herr Poldi died of a most unusual and horrible parasitic infection. For the last few months, that is to say, (Please turn to page 32)

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Terrible Vengeance

(Continued from page 91)

ever since I was called into this case I have devoted myself to the task of discovering its cause, its source. I have fine-combed medical literature in order to discover similar cases. . . .

"And what have you found to be the cause?" Karl asked quietly.

"Alas, it has been a singularly fruitless search. No similar case ever has been recorded. Still I did run down this much. Rumors of such a disease are known, vague statements here and there, giving practically no information but all conforming in this one respect. . . .

"And what respect is that?"

"Invariably the disease is connected with gypsies."

"Gypsies?" Karl asked with composure.

"Yes. Now what I'd like to know is: did Herr Poldi have any gypsy friends?"

"None that I know of," said Karl shaking his head. "But of course much of his life was a secret to me. He had many affairs."

"That's a clue," said the doctor, "a jealous gypsy mistress, for example. Or perhaps some of his friends had relations with gypsies? Well that at any rate seems to me the path to search for the origin of his horrible disease, and I shall so advise the police and the health authorities in my

report on this peculiar case."

At this moment the telephone rang. "Pardon me," said Karl. He lifted the instrument. The chief teller of the Merkur Bank was at the other end.

"Herr Schmidt," said the voice, "did you ever know anyone of the name of King Rom? — I thought not. Well I'm holding an ugly looking fellow, a gypsy, who has presented us with a check for thirty-three thousand shillings drawn against your account nearly a year ago. Sure, plain forgery. And we've turned the case over to the police authorities who will get in touch with you to testify against this man."

Karl replaced the instrument quietly and pondered for a moment. "Don't go yet, doctor," he said. "Let's first have a drink of Poldi's prize cognac, in memory of him. And then I'll tell you a little thing here I'd like to show you." He fished around in his desk and brought out a lump of lead.

"Look at that, doctor," Karl said while he went to fetch the decanter, "and tell me if you can recognize my features. A gypsy girl once cast this piece of lead and said the features would be those of my worst enemy, the man who would lead me to destruction. Looks awfully much like me, don't you find?"

Killed After 10 P. M.

(Continued from page 46)

and meantime shoot the body over to the morgue. I think I'll run along."

Rockford looked very pained. "Listen, Marcus, you don't really think there's a woman hooked up in this, do you?"

Corcoran pointed to the vest. "That's face powder, Tom. If you want to, get it analyzed." He crossed to Schlaik. "Mr. Schlaik, I think the inspector will have to hold you for further questioning."

Schlaik did not look at him, did not remove his glassy eyes from their fixed unwavering stare on the dead man. His long, powerful arms hung motionless at his sides.

Corcoran turned to Rockford. "Will you want Mr. Davidson?"

"I'll want him later," Rockford growled. "He seen Schlaik open the door. He's been acting as if he's scared to hell of Schlaik—scared to tell all he saw. When I get Schlaik behind bars, maybe he won't be so afraid to talk. I'll get his address and let him go for the time being."

"I'll get his address and let him go for the time being."

CORCORAN'S limousine was parked at the curb, his uniformed chauffeur frowning behind the wheel. It was a quiet, dark street of three- and four-story houses, many of them, like the one Corcoran had just come out of, containing studios. He stood drawing on his gloves, sniffing the crisp air of a starlit winter's night. Then he said, "Wake up, Gus. My office, and climbed in. He sat back in the deep, soft cushions, uncapped an electric lighter attached to the sill of the rear window and touched it to a cigarette. The big car hummed swiftly, smoothly through the city streets.

"Anything hot, boss?" Gus asked over his shoulder.

"I think so," Corcoran said, not happily.

"Swell!"

Corcoran shook his head in the darkness, said, "Uh-uh."

"Hah!"

"Unpleasant, I mean."

"How come?"

"Girl in it, I think. Tom Rockford has a pretty hot hunch himself. There may of course be a connection."

The chauffeur groaned, "Jeeze, these dames!" and swung into a broad boulevard. White globes stretched away atop wrought-iron lamp-posts. Gus toiled the car across a wide plaza and drew up before a large white building. He hopped out, opened the rear door and Corcoran alighted, snapped his cigarette onto the pavement. Sparks showered upward.

"I'll be down in a minute," Corcoran said.

He entered the vault-like lobby, crossed its lozenge-shaped tiles and climbed a broad stairway to the second floor. In his office, dark but for an inverted cone of light above a broad desk, he found Warburg, one of his assistants. He had covered the Bennett killing in place of Warburg. He said now:

"John, get the telephone company and locate the address of Belmont 2630."

"Steer already, huh?"

"May be a blind one."

Fifteen minutes later Corcoran climbed into his limousine and said, "Twenty-three Paxton Street. Know where it is?"

"I got an idea."

Killed After 10 P. M.

It was on the south side of the city. Paxton Street was broad, deserted at this hour. Most of the houses were of frame construction, with high stoops, and some of them had small lawns, and there were a few trees, scattered. Gus rolled along slowly, craning his neck.

Then he said, "It ought to be along here. I'll look."

He stopped the car, climbed out and ran up to one of the stoops. He came back and said: "That's two-ninety-one, the one I went to. It must be the next one."

Corcoran climbed ten wooden steps, saw a sign alongside the vestibule door reading, *Furnished Rooms*. There was no bell button outside, but he found one within the vestibule. He pressed it and in a moment a short, very round woman—old, rosy-cheeked—opened the door.

Corcoran lifted his hat. "Pardon me, madam. Does Miss Eden live here?"

The woman was jolly. "Yes, sir; she does."

"Is she at home?"

"No, sir; she isn't."

"It's very important. Do you know where I can find her?"

"Yes, I do. She works nights at the Casa Ricardo. I think she starts at eleven."

"Do you remember when she went out?"

"No, sir. I'm sorry, but I don't."

He said, "Thank you very much, madam," and departed.

"Casa Ricardo," he said to the chauffeur.

"Ah, a hot spot, hey!"

CORCORAN knew the Casa Ricardo, for he by no means led a sedentary existence. He reflected that the Casa Ricardo was considered a fashionable resort, expensive but on the level. It served excellent food, good liquor, and there was no gambling.

Ben Ricardo met him in the blue-draped foyer and said: "Well, well, Mr. Corcoran, this is something."

"Hello, Ben."

"Take the D. A.'s things, Marie."

The checkroom girl took Corcoran's things and he stood plucking the starched cuffs of his shirt slightly out of his coat-sleeves.

Ricardo was young, in his early thirties. He was rugged, swart, good-looking. "Quiet table or one in the—"

"You've got a private room, haven't you?"

"Sure. Got a party coming?"

"No. Where's the room?"

As Corcoran followed Ricardo up a stairway, he could hear the muffled rhythm of the orchestra below and beyond. Ricardo led him into a small private room, richly furnished, and Corcoran said:

"Now you've got a girl working here, Ben. Eden's the name. Send her up, will you?"

Ricardo's voice dropped, his eyes steeled. "What's the matter? What's wrong?"

"Send her up, will you, Ben?" Corcoran said, and walked away to the other side of the room to admire a mural.

Ricardo stood for half a minute darkly regarding Corcoran's well-groomed back. Then he pivoted and went out. After a moment Corcoran (Please turn to page 94)

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Killed After 10 P. M.

(Continued from page 93)

began pacing slowly up and down, his chin lowered, thumb and index finger rubbing his jaw. When the door again opened, Ricardo stood there, with a slim, brown-haired girl who held a light-colored satin dressing-gown about her.

"Thanks, Ben," Corcoran said.

THE girl came in and Ricardo, his eyes still hanging darkly, quizzically on Corcoran, remained standing in the doorway.

Corcoran crossed the room, took hold of the doorknob and said, with a dip of his head, "Thank you, Ben." Ricardo stepped back into the corridor and Corcoran closed the door.

The girl was standing in the center of the room. She was, Corcoran saw, very beautiful. She had a sweet face, rather unusual, rather intelligent, and her eyes were large, very dark—and very wide now with wonderment. There was a certain breathlessness about her. She seemed poised, as if ready to take flight.

He was casual, making a casual gesture: "Sit down, Miss Eden."

She let herself down slowly, quietly, to the edge of an armchair, drawing the wrap still more tightly about her.

Corcoran sat down on a straight-backed chair and stared at the floor, elbow on knee, chin in hand. "You know Charles Bennett, I believe, don't you?"

Her "Yes" was quick, quiet, with an inquisitive rise at the end.

"In what capacity?"

"I—well, I have posed for him."

"Much?"

"When did you last see him?" He looked up at her.

Her eyes were fixed on him. After a moment she said: "Three days ago. Wednesday."

"I saw a rough outline he'd been working on. Striking likeness."

"Yes. I was posing for it."

"At what time did you come to work tonight?"

"Usual time." She sat very straight, her firm breasts rounding the satin wrap.

"A little before eleven, or eleven."

"Where did you come from?"

"My room."

"Direct?"

"Yes. I walked. It was a nice night and I walked."

"What time did you leave?"

"At ten past ten."

"You're exact as that?"

"It happened to set my watch by my alarm clock."

He sat back, put his hands on his knees, stared down between his knees and drew his lower lip in between his teeth, then let it go with a slight popping sound.

"When you left the place where you live, did you meet anyone?"

"No, I didn't."

"Meet anyone on the way?"

"No one I know."

He said, "M'm," and frowned. She had not moved. She still sat poised on the edge of the chair, her eyes very wide, her voice very low, still a little breathless.

Corcoran said, "Bennett's been murdered."

"I thought it was something like that."

He looked up. "Why?"

"The kind of questions you were asking."

He regarded her for a long moment. "Did you think that when you first came in here?"

"I didn't know what to think when Mr. Ricardo said the district attorney wanted to see me. I—well, I was naturally frightened a little."

"Why should you have been frightened?"

"I don't know. I guess the average person would be frightened if she were called unexpectedly by the district attorney."

"What do you do here, dance?"

"Yes."

"Not meaning to be derogatory to ward dancers, I still think you've uncommon logic to be a night club entertainer."

SHE shrugged, looked downward and aside. "One has to make a living. I've looks and a shape and I can dance. I pose for artists sometimes, too. Every little bit helps."

He wore a veiled smile. "I suppose you support somebody?"

"My father and a younger brother, in Topeka, and a younger sister in school."

"And you're sure you didn't see Charles Bennett tonight?"

Her eyes came back to him, quickly, brightening, and her low, whispered voice said, "I didn't see Charles Bennett."

"Did he ever try to make love to you?"

She stood up. "Of course not!" And then she put her hands to her face, whimpered, "Oh, I'm sorry he's dead. He was a good man. He was very kind to me, understanding."

She wore black tights. Corcoran rose. "Please," he murmured, "don't cry."

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• MYSTERY •

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Killed After 10 P. M.

She took down her hands to draw the wrap about her again. "I'm sorry." She dried her eyes, saying, "I don't see why you should think I did it," in a mutinous but rather weak little voice.

"Curiously," he said, "I found an address book of Bennett's with the E page torn out. Then I looked on a card on which he'd scrawled a lot of telephone numbers. Found your name there."

He saw her throat quiver for an instant. She swallowed, staring straight at him.

The door opened and Ricardo stood there, a shadow on his face. He said in a cluttered voice, "I'm sorry, Mr. Corcoran, but the folks are asking for Marjory. Couldn't you—"

"Do you always come in without knocking, Ben?"

The shadow grew deeper. "I'm sorry," Ricardo muttered.

Corcoran made a negligible gesture, said offhand, "You can go, Miss Eden. We'll see more of you again."

She walked to the door, very straight. Ricardo had a hand out. He took hold of her arm, squeezed it, tightened one corner of his mouth. He left the door open and went away with Marjory Eden.

Outside, Corcoran put his feet on the step of his limousine.

Gus said eagerly, "Didja nail something, boss?"

Corcoran was thinking. In a moment he said, "Drive back to that Paxton Street address," and stepped into the car.

The jolly rooming-house mistress, on being again confronted by Corcoran's face and rained hat, lost some of her jollity but was still very polite. "Yes, sir?"

"Madam, I am District Attorney Corcoran. Could I trouble you to show me to Miss Eden's room?"

"But I told you, sir—"

"I know. I want to see her room."

The woman looked pained. "Oh, dear. Oh, dear me, what is this, what is this?"

Corcoran stepped into the hallway. "Doubtless nothing at all. I hope you don't mind. I'll wait here till you get a key."

It was a large room, with a day-bed in one far corner. It looked more like a living-room. The furniture was decent, it looked comfortable and everything was clean and fresh-looking.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear!" bewailed the woman.

CORCORAN went first to the bathroom. It was a step up and looked as though it had been a large closet. He examined the soiled towels, the wash-basin. He came back into the large room and sat down before an old Governor Winthrop desk. He rifled its drawers and pigeon-holes. He was looking for letters from Bennett. He found none.

"What kind of girl is Miss Eden?" he asked.

"Oh, dear; I've found her the best. Always pays her rent on time. Very quiet. Usually these night club women live in swell hotels."

"A'm," he said, reading a letter from her father. It was a letter full of thanksgiving. He read two more; read one from her sister at school; one from her brother. He put things in order again and rose, stood with (Please turn to page 96)

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Killed After 10 P. M.

(Continued from page 95)

his hands on his hips, nibbling on his lip, his eyes narrowed and swinging puzzled about the room.

His swinging gaze stopped. It stopped on the alarm clock that stood on a low bureau. He crossed, bent down and listened. It was not going. It had stopped at nine-fifty-eight. Marjory Eden said she had set her wrist watch by it at ten past ten.

Corcoran swiveled and said quickly, "Take a look at the clock, madam."

She crossed the room.

"It's stopped," she said.

"Yes. At what time did it stop?"

"Well, you can see for yourself it stopped at nine-fifty-eight."

He dropped his voice. "Please remember that. Memorize the time at which that clock stopped. I'll be back in a minute."

He left her standing in a daze and went rapidly down the staircase, out and down to the street.

"Gus," he said, "pull up about a block and park. I'm going to wait upstairs a while."

"Should I come back on foot?"

"No. Stay in the car."

Corcoran returned to Marjory Eden's room and said quietly but point-blank to the woman: "You can go downstairs now. I'm going to remain here. Make certain you don't tip off Miss Eden that I'm in her room."

"Oh, dear; what's the world coming to?"

He saw her to the door and closed it, then clicked shut the snaplock. He turned out all the lights but one, and by this he read a magazine; read another, while the hours wore on. At half-past two he heard footsteps coming up the staircase. He rose, replaced the magazines where he had found them, snapped off the still remaining light and stood waiting. When he heard a man's voice as well as a woman's, he stepped quickly to a closet, pressed into it and left the door open a matter of an inch.

HE heard the sound of the snaplock being working and heard footsteps come in. The door closed.

"I'll go now, Marjory," a low, troubled voice said.

It was Ben Ricardo's.

"Oh, Ben," Marjory Eden said wearily. "I'm so done in."

"Back up."

"Well . . . I'll go."

"Ben . . . just a minute. Will you sit with me just a minute, Ben?"

"Gosh, you're shivering, Marj."

"I—I'm afraid."

He muttered: "That D. A. he ought to have his face caved in."

"No, Ben. No. He was very nice. He couldn't have been nicer. But . . . I'm—"

Ben Ricardo's voice came low, warm: "Don't be afraid, Marj. Look at me, would you! Got my arm around—"

"It feels good, Ben. Thanks. Just a little minute, till I—I feel all right."

There was a moment of silence, and then she said, "You've been good to me, Ben."

"As a matter of fact, I've been nuts about you ever since you came to work for me. That's on the level—but you can't forget it if you want to. I'm not trying to steal bases on you. But if you want to remember it, remember

too that I'll go the limit for you. Whatever you did, Marj—"

She burst into tears. "Oh, Ben! Oh, Ben!" she cried brokenly.

Corcoran opened the closet door, stood holding it open with one outstretched arm. His face looked as if he did not relish his job. He even dropped his eyes a bit, pursed his lips, deep furrows on his forehead; said in a choked voice that tried hard to mask his inner feeling:

"You'd better get some things together in a suitcase, Miss Eden."

Ricardo's eyes flashed and his mouth hardened. "Look here, Mr. Corcoran—"

"Enough, Ben. You're out of this."

"Am I?"

"Miss Eden, get your things together."

Her voice was listless. "Let me go, Ben." She dragged her feet to the closet, pulled out a black patent leather suitcase and began throwing clothes into it.

Ricardo snapped. "For two cents—"

"For two cents," said Corcoran gravely, "you'd smack me. Well, don't try it, Ben. Use your head and keep your mouth shut. If you think I enjoy making this pinch, you're crazy." He strode to a window, clasped his hands behind his back and stared intently at the night-black pane.

In a little while Marjory Eden said, "I'm ready," in a sapped voice.

Ricardo took her bag.

CORCORAN joined them and they went down the staircase. The landlady was standing back in the shadow, her eyes round with amazement. While Ricardo and the girl went to the front door, Corcoran stopped in the hallway to say to the woman:

"Thank you for your cooperation, madam."

"What has she—she done?"

Ricardo and Marjory Eden were walking out to the stoop, staring down the steps.

Corcoran said: "That will likely be in the newspapers. Good-night." He touched his hat and strode toward the open hall door.

He heard a sharp outcry. Ricardo's.

He caught a glimpse of Ricardo swinging the girl violently to one side with one hand while he raised the other in front of his face. A gun banged. The glass panel in the top of the vestibule crashed. The landlady screamed.

Corcoran whipped out a small automatic pistol and jumped as a second shot banged somewhere in the street. He saw Ricardo miss a step, heard him grunt. Corcoran fired in the air once. Then he heard feet pounding away and saw the shadow of a man racing off up the street.

"Hey, you!" Corcoran yelled.

He jumped past Ricardo, reached the sidewalk and broke into a run. Up ahead he saw the shadow fleeing fast. He saw the tail light of his limousine. He heard a voice bellow, "Stop!" His chauffeur's voice.

The running man skidded away into the center of the street and fired. Corcoran heard the snarl of lead against metal in his limousine. Then he saw dust fire. In the middle of the street went down hard, his gun bouncing from his hand.

Corcoran reached him, found him ly-

Killed After 10 P. M.

ing on his side, panting. And Gus came over, carrying his gun.

"What the hell, boss?"

Corcoran shrugged. "You've got me, Gus."

"Gee, I think I nailed him dead center."

Ricardo came out into the street, one hand pressed to his side, his voice taut: "What did we walk into?"

The man lying in the street—scarcely more than a youth—raised his chin and cried, "You know what! You and her! I saw you running away with her!"

Ricardo said to Corcoran, "The guy's got dreams."

Marjory Eden came walking slowly, wooden-legged, and dropped to her knees. "Philip," she said in a low, hopeless voice.

"I saw you!" the youth cried. "Meant to get both of you! I was watching! I trailed you from that night club of his! You're a dirty tramp, Marjory—a dirty tramp." He spat at her.

"Davidson . . . Davidson," Corcoran murmured ruefully.

The girl stood up, shaking her head, dazed. Ricardo, his face pale with pain, put an arm around her. "Take it easy, Marj."

Corcoran turned to Gus. "We'll run him to the hospital." And to Ricardo, "You too, Ben. Come along, Miss Eden."

SHE was still sitting in the reception room at the hospital when Corcoran got out of the elevator and came in. He laid his hat and overcoat on a chair. She did not raise her eyes but sat looking tired and forlorn, her elbows on her knees, her eyes red and swollen from crying. He lit a cigarette, gazing down at her through the first puff of smoke. He tossed the match into a sand-filled urn and sat down beside her.

"I ought to apologize," he said, squinting down at the red end of his cigarette.

"No, don't. It wasn't your fault."

He took a drag. "Philip Davidson just died."

She winced a little.

"He didn't talk much," Corcoran went on, bending his brows moodily. "It was pretty jumbled. He said he got into Bennett's place through a skylight and that Bennett walked in a little later and surprised him and he stabbed Bennett with the letter opener. He came back to the studio later through desperation. He'd lost a fountain pen there with his initials on it. He came the regular way because he knew the door was open then. But he knocked first—and Schlaik opened it; and while Schlaik went down to meet the police, Davidson recovered his fountain pen from beneath the divan. Very incoherent."

"He said, of course, that he'd emptied Bennett's pockets and broke open his cash box to make it look like robbery. But he was so incoherent that I couldn't make out why particularly he wanted to make it appear as robbery."

SHE sat up, leaned back, far back, and stared desolately at the ceiling. "I know why. I know. Philip fell in love with me six months ago, but I told him it was no use, I was not in love with him. But he came around. And, well, I did go out with him, I did let him kiss me—I thought to make him happy. It didn't make me happy. Yet he'd get insanely jealous if I went out with anyone else. I liked him in a way and I was desperately sorry for him—because I really couldn't love him."

"Then I began posing for Mr. Bennett. I needed the money and Mr. Bennett was a fine man. I posed in the nude. He painted a nude of me. It hung for a few days in a gallery and while it was there Philip saw it and recognized me. He accused me of all kinds of things. He went to the gallery every day it was there and then it was gone, and he grew more insensate because he figured someone else had it. I told him that Mr. Bennett had taken it back to his studio, to work a little more on it. That was tonight—or rather last night—it's morning now. He said he was going to Bennett's studio, steal the painting and take it home and burn it. He ran off. I didn't know what to do. I tried to get Mr. Bennett on the phone, but there was no answer. So finally I decided to go to the studio."

"You know I got there too late. I saw Mr. Bennett lying on the floor. I listened to his heart. I didn't hear any beats. I knew he was dead. And then I was panicky. I thought the police would check up through people he had known, and I tore that 'E' page out of his little book, because I remembered his having written my telephone number in it. It wasn't for myself. But I was afraid the police would get to Philip through me. I didn't love him—but I did pity him, he was so blind. I did pity him. He was so jealous of Ben, too, and Ben never so much as—until tonight—"

Corcoran patted her knee. "I understand." He stood up. "My car is outside. You won't be able to see Ben till morning."

He took her arm and they left the hospital and he handed her into the limousine, smiled as he followed her in and said, "I'm glad this is home, Miss Eden—instead of to jail. . . . Gus, the Paxton Street address again."

Gus rolled his eyes, said out of the side of his mouth, "Jeez, what a run-around, what a run-around!"



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Little Book of Strange Crimes

(Continued from page 27)

leaned over it, gazed at him long and silently, until at last she faded away.

The ghost—or what Safta thought was the ghost—came nightly, staring mutely. He grew thin and pale. In days he seemed to age by years. Then one night the specter did not come. But the next day a friend, looking strangely shaken, spoke to him. "Stephen. Your wife. She haunted us last night."

"You, too?" Safta whispered. Now the apparition troubled the entire village. Damian was in an uproar and panic. "We must band together," someone suggested. "She will not molest us in a crowd." They gathered at sundown in a single large room, but they saw her come as usual, shedding her eerie blue light. She passed through the terrified crowd and vanished.

A hubbub, a babble of frightened voices. "What can we do! What can we do!" At last a woman, very old, very wise, spoke. "There is only one thing to do when a suicide cannot rest."

All Damian set out together in the darkness, Stephen Safta with them, for the grim, unhallowed spot where the self-destroyer lay. They dug in the grave. They reached the coffin, raised it, removed the lid. Safta turned aside and hid his face, unable to look upon what was to follow. While some kindled a blaze, a long, sharp knife was produced. It was buried in the dead woman's flesh. It cut and sliced. Mrs. Safta's heart was taken out and placed in the flames.

While the corpse was reburied, the fire was tended until the heart was ashes. Mrs. Safta's ghost bothered the village no more. She had found the rest denied her. The ancient sorcery had worked.

This happened not in the Middle Ages, but in 1934.

CELEBRITIES OF THE MONTH

CALEB POWERS, fifteen, Perry. Mich. He had been reading all the Dillingham news, dreamed that the outlaw had him cornered, got up in his sleep, and jumped out of a second story window. Minor injuries.

John Kovacs, Budapest, hansom. He got eight days and lost his job for locking up a roomer who couldn't pay his rent.

Sergei William Fine, Denver, policeman. When a mother phoned and asked him to send up an officer to give her naughty son the scare of his life, he refused, said, "The boy should be taught to be friendly with officers of the law."

Anatole Diebler, Paris, executioner. He has beheaded 300 persons, made \$149,512.50, and is inventing a non-stop guillotine.

Mike Monosky, Brownsville, Pa. When two gunmen held him up on the way home he obligingly went through his pockets, found eleven cents, turned the sum over. But when the disgusted thugs slapped him he got mad, knocked one down and started for the other. They made themselves scarce.

One hundred and sixteen prisoners, county jail, Portland, Me. When the rockpile was abolished and they were

put at washing dishes and scrubbing floors, they petitioned to be returned to the he-man job of making little ones out of big ones.

NOW that the NRA code of the small arms industry bans sales to gangsters, the underworld is making its own machine guns. . . . Gangland has taken up the idea behind the circulating library and started the circulating arsenal, in which you can rent a rod for fifteen dollars a day.

WHERE THERE'S A WAY THERE'S A WILL

AN old woman in servants' dress was hurrying along the road into the Portuguese town of Riodades from the run-down estate where she lived alone with her eccentric mistress—wealthy, friendless Olinda Heitora.

A florid handsome man—Manuel Proena, the barber—observed her haste. Some instinct told him that it would be to his advantage to learn its cause. They knew each other and he stopped her.

"Where are you off to in such a hurry?"

"My mistress has just died! I am going for help to prepare her for burial!"

The barber considered this information. "Don't be in such a rush. Your mistress was a rich woman. How would you like to be too?" He outlined a suddenly conceived plan of daring cunning. The old woman hesitated, but Manuel was persuasive. She gave in.

"Now," he said, "come with me and keep your mouth shut. First we'll go to my shop." There he provided himself with certain accessories, and the plotters proceeded to the house of death.

Olinda Heitora's body lay on the bed where she had died. They gathered her up and hid her. Proena put on a wig he had brought, made up his face with grease paint, donned a nightgown, got into bed. He had transformed himself into an excellent imitation of the dead woman.

"Now," he told the servant, "fetch the lawyer." She brought him. He sat by the bed; and the barber, in a cracked, quavering voice, dictated a will in which the Heitora property was left to himself. His deception succeeded in the dim light of one smoky lamp. Even the forged signature was accepted.

The masquerade was over, the lawyer gone. Proena rose, removed his make-up, brought the corpse back to the death bed. "Get the doctor," he ordered. "Tell him to hurry, that she may not last." But, of course, the medical man found Olinda Heitora dead.

She was buried. Her false will was produced. There was surprise that she had made the barber her heir, but it was accepted as part of her well-known queeriness. Proena received his legacy. For two years he lived in luxury. He thought that it would last.

But he forgot that he had an accomplice. Not long ago the old servant, in her turn, was dying. She was stricken in conscience, and before she breathed her last she confessed the



We're off on a Treasure Hunt, mates . . . with pirate ships and whales, crocodiles and storms. That is, we are, if we're readers of **TINY TOWER**, the new magazine that is full of good fun for little boys and girls. And after they finish the Treasure Hunt, there are so many other fascinating things to do and read.



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Little Book of Strange Crimes

plot. Proena found himself rudely snatched from his life of ill-gotten ease to the hardships of the town jail.

WHEN the trial of two young New Yorkers, accused of a drugstore hold-up, began, it ran into snags. Court had to adjourn because of the illness of a witness, again because a juror came down with grippie, a third time when an automobile accident laid up still another important witness, and a fourth when the arresting policeman went to the hospital with a broken leg. Mistrial. The case had been started on Friday the 13th.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- (1) Underworld slang for Brooklyn.
- (2) Attorney General Cummings figures 557,891, about twice the number in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- (3) Bonnie Parker of the Barrow mob in the Southwest.
- (4) Seventy-five hundred francs.
- (5) Two early undercover prohibition agents. They put on such a good show, pulling sensational raids in fantastic disguises, that, according to some authorities, they almost made the dry law popular.
- (6) They never got him there.
- (7) Gangsters for railroad station.
- (8) In 1891 Police Chief Hennessy of New Orleans was slain and eleven Italian subjects, suspected of the crime, were lynched. The United States had to pay their families \$25,000.
- (9) Two naval enlisted men tried with Mrs. Fortescue and Lieutenant Massie in the Honolulu "honor murder" case.
- (10) What the gangs call a cop.

FAVORITE SALADS

This month's food circulars have been designed to help you plan and serve delicious salads of every description. Here they are:

1. Salad greens.
2. Salad dressings.
3. Simple salads.
4. Fish salads and cheese.
5. Meat salads and egg salads.
6. Cheese and egg salads.
7. Fruit salads.
8. Dessert salads.

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The Woman in Scarlet Stockings

(Continued from page 34)

Mathilda's the little girl she sent off to church that Sunday. She often walks this road. Walks like a man. She's strong, and sane except about the old house. She used to go running to the old house, trying to be on time, over and over again. It was boarded up, of course, and the first sight of it often would straighten her out; but not always. She has been seen trying to open the front door, whispering, calling out to her sister, that she was coming, coming, coming.

Kenneth said: "So you knew it was she all the time. Bunny was telling us. And you said nothing."

"Bunny's high-strung. So is Eleanor. I didn't want to feed their imaginations any more than they had already been fed."

"But suppose she goes back there tonight; she was walking that way? The fact that she found somebody in the house at last may have..."

"Oh, well, Bunny's sensible."

Here was the Greerson driveway. They left the car in the open carriage shed. Supper was ready waiting, but Kenneth did not eat.

"That's the matter, Kenneth?"

"Has she always been around here?"

"No, she came back last month—while you were away. Why?"

"I told Eleanor the old woman was just something Bunny made up in his mind. She thought so, too. If the old woman should come to the door in the dark night—That's not all. I told her about Bertha Blyven."

"You're a donkey."

Kenneth looked as if he believed that. "All right. But, Dad, now I want to go back there, and quickly, to tell her we saw the old woman, and who she is."

"Very well."

"But you must come, too. Please."

ELEANOR, putting dishes away in the lamp-lit kitchen, walked from darkness to darkness. A whip-poor-will began loudly its witless reiteration outside the window and bending down she looked out, saw in silhouette, a large bird on the stone wall, ugly in a nameless fashion, saw how it raised its head and fluttered its wing each time it whistled, heard the slight smacking sound after. She wished it would go away.

In the big room within the outer radiance of the fire in the huge fireplace, Bunny sat at a trestle table, as usual writing down and diagramming further plans for the farm. He did not speak as she came in from the kitchen and sat down opposite him with her sewing. The light was on her chin and under her eyes which were all shadow. It was too quiet. She wanted Bunny to say something, to admit straight out that he had only imagined his old woman.

Then, into the silence, spreading out, filling it like a quick torrent, like the rising, spreading sound heard under ether, she heard one word, one straining whisper:

"Bertha!"

Eleanor looked at her sewing. Now, she was imagining things. Bunny made another mark in his paper.

There were many other sounds, sounds in the walls. She even heard the latch of the front door click, and with amazing clarity for something imagined, click again, as if it had been closed after some one entering. She

looked across without raising her eyes, stealthily, at Bunny's hand, the one holding the pencil. Was it trembling? Was he, too, concealing his fears?

She said: "It's getting late."

He looked up. "Must be all of nine o'clock. How sleepy we get out here!"

"Let's go to bed."

He yawned and agreed; went out into the front hall and locked the door. He called from there: "Why did you lock the cupboard under the stairs?"

"I didn't lock it."

He came back. "Perhaps I did," he said. "It's no matter."

They went upstairs, he first, said good-night at the head of the stairway, for they slept in separate bedrooms.

"Sleep well."

"I'll try," she said. His expression in the lamplight was strange; his eyes moved too quickly. Was he terrified, as she was; or was this again her imagination?

From his bed in the west room he called good-night. For a long time she combed her hair in the lamplight, watching herself in the mirror. Behind her on that square beam was an iron hook. Was that the one Bertha had used? Possibly. She combed very slowly. If she could only lock the door, perhaps that would make her feel better. But there was no lock, the latch was broken.

She heard, or seemed to hear, a door open downstairs in the hall. The cupboard door. One hand up with the comb she waited. It was nothing. It was the wind... A stair creaked, quite plainly. After a long time another creaked. She heard some one breathing out there, just outside her door.

The latch began to move.

The door opened. She, the old woman, stood in the doorway, black bonnet and shawl. As she came into the room she raised her hands, reaching. Her arms were strong as a man's. Silent, robbed of her voice by terror, Eleanor struggled against their tight embrace. The lamp toppled, smashed. There was light still, a bluish light from a pool of kerosene, spreading.

Smiling lips lifted from long, gray teeth; the old woman whispered: "There, there, dear. It's Matilda, come back."

Bunny's voice called: "Eleanor! Eleanor!"

In her arms, tightly cradled, the old woman carried Eleanor down the stairs, quickly, quickly, whispering. Eleanor did not hear. She did not struggle.

MIDWAY between highway and farm the Greerson car hit something with a clang. For a moment they sat in silence. Kenneth climbed out, flashlight in hand. Presently he said: "The rod's bent almost double. We'll have to leave her here."

They stumbled on. At the first stone gate, there was the house, and a light upstairs, reflecting on the leaves of an elm. They went on through the orchard. Kenneth whispered: "Wait," and pointed.

Under an apple tree near the house stood Matilda, the old woman. She did not move.

The light upstairs was brighter. Lights flickered in the downstairs windows.

Bunny's voice called: "Who's that?" "Doctor Greerson and I," Kenneth shouted. "We came back. The car—"

The Woman in Scarlet Stockings

"For God's sake come quickly. Eleanor's gone."

They found him crawling in the long grass. He tried to tell how he had heard the crash of the lamp, had found her room ablaze, had tried to smother the fire.

All the windows were broadly lighted now. From the rain-soaked shingles of the great roof rose clouds of steam and smoke; and within, a multitude of voices were started, crackling, whistling, whispering. The green woods stared. As flames filled the kitchen wing a dish fell, a small deliberate crash, then another and another.

They looked over the ground for Eleanor, calling.

The Doctor found her. She was lying at the old woman's feet, and the old woman was smiling at the glare, as with a rending final cry the roof-tree pitched down.

"I carried her out—in time, in time," Matilda said. "Oh, my God! I've dreamed so many times I was too late!" Her head was filled with a weary confusion of madness and memories. How many times through the years she had come back here! She sighed: "Bertha, Bertha. At last. At last."

Dr. Greerson on his knees listened for the beat of a heart that had stopped from sheer terror. For a long time he worked over her. "We're too late," he said.

The Sinister Beard

(Continued from page 39)

had become fascinated by the bulging smock on the floor.

"Dr. Arlen, eh?" muttered Ellery. "Thank you," and he began to pace up and down as Mrs. Royce took Peter by the arm and firmly removed him from the studio. A formidable lady, he thought, with her vigorous room-shaking tread.

"Come on," said Murch suddenly, going to the door.

"Where?"

"Downstairs." The detective signalled a trooper to guard the studio and led the way. "I want to show you," he said as they made for the main part of the house, "the reason for the beard on that dame-in-the-picture's jaw."

"Indeed?" murmured Ellery, and said nothing more. Murch paused in the doorway of a pale Colonial living-room and jerked his head.

Ellery looked in. A hollow-chested, cadaverous man in baggy tweeds sat slumped in a Cogswell chair staring at an empty glass in his hand, which was shaking. His eyes were yellow-bellied and shot with blood, and his loose skin was a web of red veins.

"That," said Murch contemptuously and yet with a certain triumph, "is Mr. John Shaw."

Ellery noted that Shaw possessed the same heavy features, the same fat lips and rock-hewn nose, as the wonderful Mrs. Royce, and for that fact that it's John Shaw. It's my hunch Dr. Arlen painted that beard as a clue to his killer. The only one around here with a beard is Shaw. It ain't evidence, I admit, but it's something to work on. And believe you me," he said with a snap of his brown teeth, "I'm going on it."

And Ellery also noted that on Mr. John Shaw's unsteady chin there was a bedraggled, pointed beard.

MR. MASON, a bit greenish about the jowls, was waiting for them in a sombre reception-room. "Well?" he asked.

"Captain Murch," murmured Ellery, "has a theory."

The detective scowled. "Plain as day. It's John Shaw. It's my hunch Dr. Arlen painted that beard as a clue to his killer. The only one around here with a beard is Shaw. It ain't evidence, I admit, but it's something to work on. And believe you me," he said with a snap of his brown teeth, "I'm going on it."

"John," said Mason slowly. "He certainly had motive. And yet I find it

difficult to . . ." His shrewd eyes flickered. "Beard? What beard?"

"There's a beard painted on the chin of a female face upstairs," drawled Ellery, "the face being on a Rembrandt Arlen was copying at the time he was murdered. That the good doctor painted the beard himself is quite evident. It's expertly stroked, done in black oils, and in his dead hand there's still the brush tipped with black oils. There isn't anyone else in the house who paints, is there?"

"No," said Mason uncomfortably.

"But even if Arlen did such a—mad thing," objected the lawyer, "how do you know it was just before he was attacked?"

"Aw," growled Murch, "when the hell else would it be?"

"Now, now, Captain," murmured Ellery, "let's be scientific. There's a perfectly good answer to your question, Mr. Mason. First, we all agree that Dr. Arlen couldn't have painted the beard *after* he was attacked; he died instantly. Therefore he must have painted it before he was attacked. The question is: How long before? Well, why did Arlen paint the beard at all?"

"Murch says as a clue to his murderer," muttered Mason. "But such a—fantastic legacy to the police! It looks deucedly odd."

"What's odd about it?"

"Well, for heaven's sake," exploded Mason, "if he wanted to leave a clue to his murderer, why didn't he write the murderer's name on the canvas? He had the brush in his hand. . . ."

"Precisely," murmured Ellery. "A very good question, Mr. Mason. Well, why didn't he? If he was alone—that is, if he was anticipating his murder—he certainly would have left as a written record of his concrete suspicions. The fact that he left no such record shows that he didn't anticipate his murder before the appearance of his murderer. Therefore he painted the beard *while* his murderer was present. But now we find an explanation for the painted beard as a clue. With his murderer present, he couldn't paint the name; the murderer would have noticed it and destroyed it. Arlen was forced, then, to adopt a subtle means: leave a clue that would escape his killer's attention. Since he was painting at the time, he used a painter's (Please turn to page 102)



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The Sinister Beard

(Continued from page 101)

means. Even if his murderer noticed it, he probably ascribed it to Arlen's nervousness; although the chances are he didn't notice it."

Murch stirred. "Say, listen—" "But a beard on a woman's face," groaned the lawyer. "I tell you."

"Oh," said Ellery dreamily, "Dr. Arlen had a precedent."

"Precedent?" "Yes; we've found, Captain Murch and I, that young Peter in his divine innocence had chalked a beard and mustache on one of Dr. Arlen's daubs which hangs in Peter's bedroom. This was only yesterday. Dr. Arlen whaled the tar out of him for this horrible crime *versus lart*, no doubt justifiably. But Peter's beard-scrrawl must have stuck in the doctor's mind; thrashing about wildly in his mind while his murderer talked to him, or threatened him, the beard business popped out of him. Apparently he felt that it told a story, because he used it. And there, of course, is the rub."

"I still say it's all perfectly asinine," grunted Mason. "Not asinine," said Ellery. "Interesting. He painted a beard on the chin of Rembrandt's wife. Why Rembrandt's wife, in the name of all that's wonderful!—a woman dead more than two centuries! These Shaws aren't remote descendants. . . ."

"Nuts," said Murch distinctly. "Nuts," said Ellery, "is a satisfactory word under the circumstances, Captain. Then a grim jest? Hardly. But if it wasn't Dr. Arlen's grisly notion of a joke, what under heaven was it? What did Arlen mean to convey?"

"If it wasn't so ridiculous," muttered the lawyer, "I'd say he was pointing to Peter."

"Nuts, and double-nuts," said Murch. "Well, well," sighed Mason, "I'm sure I'm all at sea. John, eh. . . . What do you think, Mr. Queen?"

"Much as I loathe argument," said Ellery, "I can't agree with Brother Murch."

"Oh, yeah?" jeered Murch. "I suppose you've got reasons?" "I suppose," said Ellery, "I have; not the least impressive of which is the dissimilar shapes of the real and painted beards."

THE detective glowered. "Well, if he didn't mean John Shaw by it, what the hell did he mean?"

Ellery shrugged. "If we knew that, my dear Captain, we should know everything."

"Well," snarled Murch, "I think it's spinach, and I'm going to haul Mr. John Shaw down to county headquarter and pump him till I find it's spinach."

"I shouldn't do that, Murch," said Ellery quickly. "If only for—"

"I know my duty," said the detective with a black look, and he stamped out of the reception-room.

John Shaw, who was quietly drunk, did not even protest when Murch shoved him into the squad car. Followed by the county morgue-truck bearing Dr. Arlen's body, Murch vanished with his prey.

Ellery took a hungry turn about the room, frowning. The lawyer sat in a crouch, gnawing his fingernails. And again the room, and the house, and the very air were charged with

silence, a very ominous silence. "Look here," said Ellery sharply, "there's something in this business you haven't told me yet, Mr. Mason."

The lawyer jumped, and then sank back hitting his lips. "He's such a worrisome creature," said a cheerful voice from the doorway and they both turned, startled, to find Mrs. Royce beaming in at them. She came in with the stride of a grenadier, her bosom joggling. She sat down by Mason's side and with daintiness lifted her capacious skirt with both hands a bit above each fat knee. "I know what's troubling you, Mr. Mason!"

The lawyer cleared his throat hastily. "I assure you—"

"Nonsense! I've excellent eyes. Mason, you haven't introduced this nice young man." Mason numbed his fingers placative. "Queen, is it? Charmed, Mr. Queen. First sample of reasonably attractive American I've seen since my arrival. I can appreciate a handsome man; I was on the London stage for many years. And really," she thundered in her formidable baritone, "I wasn't so ill-looking myself."

"I'm sure of that," murmured Ellery. "But what—"

"Mason's afraid for me," said Mrs. Royce with a girlish simper. "A most conscientious barrister! He's simply petrified with fear that whoever did for poor Dr. Arlen will seek me as his next victim. And I tell him now, as I told him a few moments ago when you were upstairs with that dreadful Murch person, that for one thing I shan't be such an easy victim—" Ellery could well believe that—and for another I don't believe either John or Agatha, which is what's in Mason's mind—don't deny it, Mason!—was responsible for Dr. Arlen's death."

"I never—" began the lawyer feebly. "Hm," said Ellery. "What's your theory, Mrs. Royce?"

"Someone out of Arlen's past," boomed the lady with a click of her jaws as a punctuation mark. "I understand he came here twenty years ago under most mysterious circumstances. He may have murdered somebody, and that somebody's brother or someone has returned to avenge—Ellery."

"Ingenious," grinned Ellery. "As tenable as Murch's, Mr. Mason."

The lady smiled. "He'll release Cousin John soon enough," she said complacently. "John's stupid enough under ordinary circumstances, you know, but when he's drunk—! There's no evidence, is there? A cigarette, if you please, Mr. Queen."

Ellery hastened to offer his case. Mrs. Royce selected a cigarette, smiled roguishly as Ellery held a match, and then withdrew the cigarette and exhaled, crossing her legs as she did so. She smoked almost in the Russian fashion, dipping her head about the cigarette instead of holding it between two fingers. A remarkable woman! "Why are you so afraid for Mrs. Royce?" Ellery drawled.

"Well—" Mason hesitated, torn between discretion and desire. "There may have been a double motive for killing Dr. Arlen, you see. That is," he added hurriedly, "if Agatha or John had anything to do—"

"Double motive?" "One, of course, is the conversion of

The Sinister Beard

the hundred thousands to Mrs. Shaw's stepchildren, as I told you. The other.

"Well, there is a proviso in connection with the bequest to Dr. Arlen. In return for offering him a home and income for the rest of his life, he was to continue to attend to the medical needs of the family, you see, with special attention to Mrs. Royce."

"Poor Aunt Maria," said Mrs. Royce with a tidal sigh. "She must have been a dear, dear person."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow, Mr. Mason."

"I've a copy of the will in my pocket." The lawyer fished for a crackling document. "Here it is. 'And in particular to conduct monthly medical examinations of my niece, Edith Shaw—or more frequently if Dr. Arlen should deem it necessary—to insure her continued good health; a provision' (mark this, Queen!) 'a provision I am sure my step-children will appreciate.'"

"A cynical addendum," nodded Ellery, blinking a little. "Mrs. Shaw placed on her trusted leech the responsibility for keeping you healthy, Mrs. Royce, suspecting that her dearly beloved step-children might be tempted to—er—tamper with your life. But why should they?"

For the first time something like terror invaded Mrs. Royce's massive face. She set her jaw and said, a trifle tremulously: "Nonsense. I can't believe—Do you think it's possible they've already tr—"

"You don't feel ill, Mrs. Royce?" cried Mason, alarmed.

Under the heavy coating of powder her coarse skin was muddily pale. "No, I—Dr. Arlen was supposed to examine me for the first time tomorrow. Oh, if it's... The food—"

"Poison was tried three months ago," quavered the lawyer, "on Mrs. Shaw, Queen, as I told you. Good God, Mrs. Royce, you'll have to—"

"Come, come," snapped Ellery. "What's the point? Why should the Shaws want to poison Mrs. Royce, Mason?"

"Because," said Mason in a trembling voice, "in the event of Mrs. Royce's demise her estate is to revert to the original estate; which would automatically mean to John and Agatha." He mopped his brow.

ELLERY heaved himself out of the chair and took another hungry turn about the sombre room. Mrs. Royce's right eyebrow suddenly began to go up and down with nervousness.

"This needs thinking over," he said abruptly; and there was something queer in his eyes that made both of them stare at him with uneasiness. "I'll stay the night, Mr. Mason, if Mrs. Royce has no objection."

"Do," whispered Mrs. Royce in a tremble; and this time she was afraid, very plainly afraid. And over the room settled an impalpable dust, like a distant sign of approaching villainy. "Do you think they'll actually try...?"

"It is entirely," said Ellery dryly, "within the realm of possibility." The day passed in a timeless haze. Unaccountably, no one came; the telephone was silent; and there was no word from Murch, so that John Shaw's fate remained obscure. Mason sat in a miserable heap on the front porch, a cigar cold in his mouth, rocking himself like a weazened old doll. Mrs.

Royce retired, subdued, to her quarters. Peter was off somewhere in the gardens tormenting a dog, occasionally Miss Krutch's tearful voice reprimanded him ineffectually.

To Mr. Ellery Queen it was a painful, puzzling, and irritatingly evil time. He prowled the rambling mansion, a lost soul, smoking tasteless cigarettes and thinking... That a blanket of menace hung over this house his nerves convinced him. It took all his will-power to keep his body from springing about at unheard sounds, moreover, his mind was distracted and he could not think clearly. A murderer was abroad; and this was a house of violent people.

He shivered and darted a look over his shoulder and shrugged and bent his mind fiercely to the problem at hand... And after hours his thoughts grew calmer and began to range themselves in orderly rows, until it was evident that there was a beginning and an end. He grew quiet.

He smiled a little as he stopped a tip-toeing maid and inquired the location of Miss Agatha Shaw's room. Miss Shaw had wrapped herself thus far in a mantle of invisibility. It was most curious. A sense of rising drama excited him a little...

A TINY female voice responded to his knock, and he opened the door to find a feminine Shaw as bony and unlovely as the masculine edition curled in a hard knot on a *chaise-longue*, staring balefully out the window. Her negligee was adorned with boa feathers and there were varicose veins on her swollen naked legs.

"Well," she said acidly, without turning. "What do you want?"

"My name," murmured Ellery, "is Queen, and Mr. Mason has called me in to help settle your—ah—difficulties. She twisted her skinny neck slowly. "I've heard all about you. What do you want me to do, kiss you? I suppose it was you who instigated John's arrest. You're fools, the pack of you!"

"On the contrary, it was your worthy Captain Murch's exclusive idea to take your brother in custody, Miss Shaw. He's not formally arrested, you know. Even so, I advised strongly against it." She sniffed, but she uncloaked the knot and drew her shapeless legs beneath her negligee in a sudden consciousness of femininity. "Then sit down, Mr. Queen. I'll help all I can."

"On the other hand," smiled Ellery, seating himself in a gilt and Gallic atrocity, "don't blame Murch overly, Miss Shaw. There's a powerful case against your brother, you know." "And me!"

"And," said Ellery regretfully, "you." She raised her thin arms and cried: "How I hate this damned, damned house that damned woman! She's the cause of all our trouble. Some day she's likely to get—"

"I suppose you're referring to Mrs. Royce. But aren't you being unfair? From Mason's story it's quite evident that there was no ghost of coercion when your stepmother willed your father's fortune to Mrs. Royce. They had never met, never corresponded, and your cousin was three thousand miles away. It's awkward for you, no doubt, but scarcely Mrs. Royce's fault."

"Fair! Who cares about fairness? She's taken our money away from us. (Please turn to page 104)"

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The Sinister Beard

(Continued from page 103)

And now we've got to stay here and—
and be fed by her. It's intolerable, I tell you! She'll be here at least two years—trust her for that, the painted old hussy!—and all that time."

"I'm afraid I don't understand. Two years?"

"That woman's will," snarled Miss Shaw, "provided that this precious cousin of ours come to live here and preside as mistress for a minimum of two years. That was her revenge, the despicable old witch! Whatever Father saw in her. To 'provide a home for John and Agatha,' she said in the will, 'until they find a permanent solution of their problems.' How d'ye like that? I'll never forget those words. Our 'problems!' Oh, every time I think—" She bit her lip, eyeing him sidewise with a sudden caution.

Ellery sighed and went to the door. "Indeed? And if something should—er—drive Mrs. Royce from the house before the expiration of the required period?"

"We'd get the money, of course," she flashed with bitter triumph; her thin dark skin was greenish. "If something should happen—"

"I trust," said Ellery dryly, "that nothing will." He closed the door and stood for a moment gnawing his fingers, and then he smiled rather grimly and went downstairs to a telephone.

JOHN SHAW returned with his escort at ten that night. His chest was hollow, his fingers shakier, his eyes bloodier; and he was sober. Murch looked like a thundercloud. The cadaverous man went in to the living-room and made for a full decanter. He drank alone, with steady mechanical determination. No one disturbed him. "Nothing," growled Murch to Ellery and Mason.

At twelve the house was asleep.

THE first alarm was sounded by Miss Krutch. It was almost one when she ran down the upper corridor screaming at the top of her voice: "Fire! Fire! Fire!" Thick smoke was curling about her slender ankles and the moonlight shining through the corridor-window behind her silhouetted her long plump trembling shanks through the thin nightgown.

The corridor erupted, boiled over. Doors crashed open, disheveled heads protruded, questions were shrieked, dry throats choked over the bitter smoke. Mr. Phineas Mason, looking a thousand years old without his teeth, fled toward the staircase. Murch came pounding up the stairs, followed by a beary, bewildered John Shaw. Scrawny Agatha in silk pajamas staggered down the hall with Peter, howling at the top of his lusty voice, in her wake. Two servants scuttled downstairs like frantic rats.

But Mr. Ellery Queen stood still outside the door of his room and looked quietly about, as if searching for someone.

"Murch," he said in a calm, penetrating voice.

The detective ran up. "The fire!" he cried wildly. "Where the hell's the fire?"

"Have you seen Mrs. Royce?"

"Mrs. Royce? Hell, no!" He ran back up the hall, and Ellery followed

on his heels, thoughtfully. Murch tried the knob of a door; the door was locked. "God, she may be asleep, or overcome by—"

"Well, then," said Ellery through his teeth as he stepped back, "stop yowling and help me break this door down. We don't want her frying in her own lard, you know."

In the darkness, in the evil smoke, they hurled themselves at the door. At the fourth assault it splintered off its hinges and Ellery sprang through. An electric torch in his hand flung its powerful beam about the room, wavered. . . Something struck it from Ellery's hand, and it splintered on the floor. . . In the next moment Ellery was fighting for his life.

His adversary was a brawny, panting demon with muscular fingers that sought his throat. He wriggled about, coolly seeking an armhold. Behind him Murch was yelling: "Mrs. Royce! It's only us!"

Something sharp and cold flicked over Ellery's cheek and left a burning line. Ellery found a naked arm. He twisted, hard, and there was a clatter as steel fell to the floor. Then Murch came to his senses and jumped in. A county trooper blundered in, fumbling with his electric torch. . . Ellery's fist drove in, hard, to a fat stomach. Fingers relaxed from his throat. The trooper found the electric switch. . .

Mrs. Royce, trembling violently, lay on the floor beneath the two men. On a chair nearby lay, in a mountain of Victorian clothing, a very odd and solid-looking contraption that might have been a rubber *brassiere*. And something was wrong with her hair; she seemed to have been partially scalped.

Ellery cursed softly and yanked. Her scalp came away in a piece, revealing a pink gray-fringed skull.

"She's a man!" screamed Murch.

"Thus," said Ellery grimly, holding Mrs. Royce's throat firmly with one hand and with the other dabbing at his bloody cheek, "vindicating the powers of thought."

"I STILL don't understand," complained Mason the next morning, as his chauffeur drove him and Ellery back to the city, "how you guessed, Queen."

Ellery raised his eyebrows. "Guessed? My dear Mason, that's considered an insult at the Queen's hearth. There was no guesswork whatever involved. Matter of pure reasoning. And a neat job, too," he added reflectively, touching the thin scar on his cheek.

"Come, come, Queen," smiled the lawyer, "I've never really believed what people call your uncanny ability to put two and two together; and though I'm not unintelligent and my legal training gives me a mental advantage over the layman and I've just been treated presumably to a demonstration of your—or—powers, I'll be blessed if I still believe."

"A skeptic, eh?" said Ellery, wincing at the pain in his cheek. "Well, then, let's start where I started—with the beard. . . An X painted on the face of Rembrandt's wife just before he was attacked. We've agreed that he deliberately painted in the beard to leave a clue to his murderer. What could he have meant? He was not

The Sinister Beard

pointing to a specific woman, using the beard just as an attention-getter; for the woman in the painting was the wife of Rembrandt, a historical figure and as far as *personae* went an utter unknown. Nor could Arlen have meant to point to a woman with a beard literally; for this would have meant a break, and there were no breaks involved. Nor was he pointing to a bearded man, for there was a man's face on the painting which he left untouched; he had meant to point to a bearded man as his murderer—that is, to John Shaw—he would have painted the beard on Rembrandt's beardless face. Besides, Shaw's is a Vandye, a pointed beard; and the beard Arlen painted was squarish in shape. . . . You see how exhaustive it is possible to be, Mason."

"Go on," said the lawyer listening intently.

"THE only possible conclusion, then, all others having been eliminated, was that Arlen meant the beard merely to indicate masculinity, since facial hair is one of the few exclusively masculine characteristics left to our sex by dear, dear woman. In other words, by painting a beard on a woman's face, any woman's face, mark—Dr. Arlen was virtually saying: 'My murderer is a person who seems to be a woman but is really a man.'"

"Well, I'll be damned!" gasped Mason.

"No doubt," nodded Ellery. "Now, a person who seems to be a woman but is really a man suggests, surely, impersonation. The only actual stranger at the house was Mrs. Royce. Neither John nor Agatha could be impersonators, since they were both well-known to Dr. Arlen as well as to you; Arlen had examined them periodically, in fact, for years as the personal physician of the household. As for Miss Krutch, aside from her unquestionable femininity—a ravishing young woman, my dear Mason—she could not possibly have had motive to be an impersonator."

"Now, since Mrs. Royce seemed the likeliest possibility, I thought over the infinitesimal phenomena I had observed connected with her person—that is, appearance and movements. I was amazed to find a vast number of remarkable confirmations!"

"Confirmations?" echoed Mason, frowning.

"Ah, Mason, that's the trouble with skinkers: they're so easily confounded. Of course! Lips constitute a strong difference between the sexes. Mrs. Royce's were shaped meticulously into a perfect cupid's-bow with lipstick. Suspicious in an old woman. The general over-use of cosmetics, particularly the heavy application of face-powder: very suspicious, when you consider that overpowdering is so common among genteel old ladies and also that a man's skin, no matter how closely and frequently shaved, is undisguisably coarser."

CLOTHES? Really potent confirmation. Why on earth that outlandish Victorian get-up? Here was presumably a woman who had been on the stage, presumably a woman of the world, a sophisticate. And yet she wore those horrible doodads of the '90s. Why? Obviously, to swathe and disguise a

padded figure—impossible with women's thin, scanty, and clinging modern garments. And the collar—ah, the collar! That was his inspiration. A choker, you'll recall, concealing the entire neck? But since a prominent Adam's-apple is an inescapable heritage of the male, a choker-collar becomes virtually a necessity in a female impersonation. Then the baritone voice, the vigorous movements, the mannish stride. . . .

"Even if I grant all that," objected Mason, "still they're generalities at best, might even be coincidences when you're arguing from a conclusion. Is that all?" He seemed considerably disappointed.

"By no means," drawled Ellery. "These were, as you say, the generalities. But your cunning Mrs. Royce was addicted to three habits which are exclusively masculine, without argument. For one thing, when she sat down, on my second sight of her, she elevated her skirts at the knees with both hands; that is, one to each knee. Now that's precisely what a man does when he sits down—raises his trousers; to prevent, I suppose, their bagging at the knees."

"But—"

"Wait. Did you notice the way she screwed up her right eyebrow constantly, raising it far up and then drawing it far down? What could this have been motivated by except the lifelong use of a monocle? And a monocle is masculine. . . . And finally, her peculiar habit, in removing a cigarette from her lips, of cupping her hand about it rather than withdrawing it between the forefinger and middle finger, as most cigarette-smokers do. But the cupping gesture is precisely the result of pipe-smoking, for a man cups his hands about the bowl of a pipe in taking it out of his mouth. Man again. When I balanced these three specific factors on the same side of the scale as those generalities, I felt certain Mrs. Royce was a male."

"What male? Well, that was simplest of all. She had shown a minute knowledge of Shaw history and specifically of Edith Shaw's history. On top of that, it took histrionic ability to carry off this female impersonation. Then there was the monocle deduction—England, surely! And the strong family resemblance. So I knew that 'Mrs. Royce,' being a Shaw undoubtedly, and an English Shaw to boot, was the other Shaw of the Morton side of the family—that is, Edith Shaw's brother Percy!"

"But she—he, I mean," cried Mason, "had told me Percy Shaw died a few months ago in Europe in an automobile accident!"

"DEAR, dear," said Ellery sadly, "and a lawyer, too. She lied, that's all!—I mean 'he,' confound it. Your argument was addressed to Edith Shaw, and Percy received it, since they probably shared the same establishment. If he received it, it was rather obvious, wasn't it, that it was Edith Shaw who must have died shortly before; and that Percy had seized the opportunity to gain a fortune for himself by impersonating her?"

"But why?" demanded Mason, puzzled, "did he kill Dr. Arlen? He had nothing to gain—Arlen's money was (Please turn to page 106)"

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The Sinister Beard

(Continued from
page 105)

destined for Shaw's cousins, not for Percy Shaw. Do you mean there was some past connection—"

"Not at all," murmured Ellery. "Why look for past connections when the motive's slick and shiny at hand? If Mrs. Royce was a man, the motive was at once apparent. Under the terms of Mrs. Shaw's will Arlen was periodically to examine the family, with particular attention to Mrs. Royce. And Agatha Shaw told me yesterday that Mrs. Royce was constrained by will to remain in the house for two years. Obviously, then, the only way Percy Shaw could avert the cataclysm of being examined by Dr. Arlen and his disguise penetrated—for a doctor would have seen the truth instantly on examination, of course—was to kill Arlen. Simple, isn't it?"

"But the beard Arlen drew—that meant, did it not, he had seen through it?"

"Not unaided. What probably happened was that the impostor, knowing the first physical examination impended, went to Dr. Arlen the other night to strike a bargain, revealing himself as a man. Arlen, an honest man, refused to be bribed. He must have been painting at the time and, thinking fast, unable to rouse the house because he was so far away from the others, unable to paint his assailant's name because 'Mrs. Royce' would see it and destroy it, thought of Peter's beard, made the lightning connection, and calmly painted it while 'Mrs. Royce' talked to him. Then he was stabbed."

"And the previous poisoning attempt on Mrs. Shaw?"

"That," said Ellery, "undoubtedly lies between John and Agatha."

Mason was silent, and for some time they rode in peace. Then the lawyer stirred, and sighed, and said: "Well,

all things considered, I suppose you should thank Providence. Without concrete evidence—your reasoning was unsupported by legal evidence, you realize that, of course, Queen—you could scarcely have accused Mrs. Royce of being a man, could you? Had you been wrong, what a beautiful suit she could have brought against you! That fire last night was an act of God."

"I am," said Ellery calmly, "above all, my dear Mason, a man of free will. I appreciate acts of God when they occur, but I don't sit around waiting for them. Consequently..."

"You mean—" gasped Mason, opening his mouth wide.

"A telephone call, a hurried trip by Sergeant Velie, and smoke-bombs were the *matéria* for breaking into Mrs. Royce's room in the dead of night," said Ellery comfortably. "By the way, you don't by any chance know the permanent address of—ah—Miss Krutch?"

The Line-Up

(Continued from
page 51)

For MYSTERY certainly gives us the best of everything in each of its varied departments. There is something for everyone, even to plans for a house. Why one gets a full-length novel complete in each issue, for ten cents. Think of it! And that's saying nothing about the other corking good stories in MYSTERY.

I especially like the short stories; they are just the right length to pick up the read while waiting for husband to come home to supper, or to glance through when one must stop and rest for a moment. The only trouble is you just cannot put MYSTERY down when once you have picked it up.

The crisp concentrated story that must be told in a limited number of words, such as your "I Go Sleuthing," appeals to me. No long drawn out explanations there.

"Gossip of Washington" is an innovation in MYSTERY MAGAZINE, and I like it, it seems to fit somehow. Perhaps it's because the doings in Washington are so mysterious to some of us.

I haven't said half what I wanted to, but the editor will say this is too much, so I'll just add, that MYSTERY is a publication for its editor to be proud of.

Belle M. Drake.

A YEAR-OLD FRIEND

PAWTUCKET, R. I.—This coming June will make it exactly a year since I began reading the TOWER MAGAZINE.

There have been many good stories edited and some not so hot.

It seemed almost impossible to get one good thriller until I stumbled on your edition. When I read it and found it an ideal mystery magazine I broadcast it to practically everyone in my neighborhood and believe me you've got a great many more MYSTERY fans than you can ever imagine.

Henry LaCossitt is a perfect writer of mysteries. May he keep up his good work.

"The Imperfect Twins" has been the best long story so far in my estimation. Gosh! It certainly held me in wild suspense.

I wish with all my heart that Riley Dillon would, for a change, become infatuated with some lovely girl and actually marry her.

Oh, and another thing I want to congratulate you on and that is the cover. You know that it's that which first attracts the attention. It did with me, anyway. No covers, ever please, with blood dripping on them. They don't look any better than these attractive covers you have now, and the chills they give you are pretty morbid ones.

I am forever a MYSTERY fan and will be so until doomsday.

Wishing you continuous luck in editing MYSTERY.

Gladys Tideman.

OUR AIM IS THE BEST

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—I have just finished reading the May MYSTERY MAGAZINE—and am about to rush to the corner to buy the June number, which I hear is just out.

Of all the detective or mystery stories, your MYSTERY MAGAZINE surely contains the finest. What I especially like about all your articles is their clean language and truthful points.

The stories are not so thinly veiled that the plots can be easily solved, but require some thought and concentration.

I have just read the book-length novel, "Black Fog," by Chas. J. Dutton, and enjoyed with Officer Rogan, the fact that all deep fogs are not "Black Fogs."

"The Girl on the Trapeze," by Ellery Queen, was interesting as a circus story.

Of course we can't expect to have our favorite author in every issue, but I did miss a story by Sax Rohmer, or at least one by Albert Payson Terhune. Perhaps you will have one of theirs for us later.

Then you have some useful departments outside the mystery stories, to wit:—The Make-Up Box, which surely contains some timely hints for her ladyship. Just what she needs—

a useful, and yet inexpensive make-up box.

These are only a few of the good things in MYSTERY MAGAZINE.

Marian L. Bradley.

NO CHANGE HERE!

AKRON, OHIO—Well! Well! Well! At last the public is offered a high class mystery magazine at a price amazingly low.

The work of such sterling authors as Vincent Starrett, Mignon G. Eberhart and Ellery Queen represent to me the finest type of analytical detective literature. I have bought many magazines solely because they contained a narrative of only one of this trio and to discover a publication selling for a dime and having two or three of authors represented in a single issue is most gratifying.

From a perusal of recent copies of MYSTERY MAGAZINE I predict a rapidly increasing circulation for your worthy publication. Certainly this will occur unless you revise your present editorial policy and give your readers an inferior class of stories.

Phil M. Smith.

A LITTLE HELPER

CHICAGO, ILL.—The mystery story kindles the spark of adventure that lies in all mankind. To some it is more than a joy—a relief from the worries and hardships of the day.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE prints those stories that hold the reader's interest, helping spare hours to fly, and enjoyed by all.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE helps thousands of readers to actually live the thrills and lives of each new character from the pens of your wonderful staff of writers. Let's have more stories by Herman Landon, the author of that sure-thriller, "The Borrowed Ghost."

My essay chair is a front-row seat to a thousand and one thrilling mystery performances, so here's to your unequalled publication—long may it live!

Helen Johnston.



THE HOUSE OF SLEEP

By
FRANK KING

•

**A NEW BOOK-LENGTH
NOVEL COMPLETE
IN THIS ISSUE**

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER I

THE afternoon grew steadily hotter. A drowsy stillness pervaded the flat desolate countryside. The thin rarefied haze that hung over the marshes shimmered in the heat. Dust lay thick on the narrow stony road.

The little man, patiently trudging along under his hiker's pack, was visibly wilting. Fifty weeks in a drapery establishment—even though it be a rather large establishment—is not the best kind of training for a holiday on the open road. Henry Downes had never attempted a walking tour before. He was beginning to appreciate some of the snags.

"My goodness!" he murmured surprisingly—for he was a very abstemious little man—"I'd give anything for a pint of beer!"

He trudged on. He estimated that he had walked nearly four miles since leaving the last village. It couldn't be long now before he came to some sign of civilization. No one had told him that the road he was traversing meandered for miles through the marshes without going anywhere in particular.

So he was almost at his last gasp when he did, at last, come to a house. He had seen it from some distance away, and had made a pathside attempt to quicken his steps. His kindly brown eyes brightened in anticipation as he followed the high wall that enclosed an extensive garden. But when he reached the gate he groaned aloud.

Never had he seen a more inhospitable house! The glimpses he could catch of it through the shrubbery showed only closely shuttered windows. The iron gates were padlocked. They bore an enameled plate:

Hawkers
No Canvassers
Circulars

Along the top of them were threaded several strands of barbed wire which were continued on the walls. Just inside stood a large sign announcing that: **TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.**

Henry Downes collapsed on the grass beside the wall. "Empty!" he muttered feebly. "And I can't go a step further!"

The sun blazed down on him in fiendish glee. He had a momentary wistful vision of the cool shady interior of Downes's Drapery Emporium. Then, suddenly, he cocked his head. He could hear music. It seemed to be coming from the house behind him. After a while he struggled to his feet and approached the gates once more. There was no doubt about it. Either a gramophone or a radio was running in the closely shuttered house. It was not empty, after all.

"They don't exactly encourage visitors," Henry told himself with a sigh. "Queer folks they must be, shut up like that. An old miser, perhaps. Or a lunatic, more likely."

As he turned he halted, shading his eyes from the sardonic glare of the sun. Hope sprang anew in him. He had been so intent on this queer house that he had not noticed another, half a mile further on the road. Could he reach it before his legs failed him entirely? Adjusting his pack, he set off to try.

The marshes on each side of the road had now given place to a narrow strip of open water, and he realized that he must be approaching the sea, or at least the estuary of the river visible in the distance. He thought that he

could feel a suspicion of a breeze blowing in, and the thought cheered him tremendously.

He plodded on through the dust. The road danced in front of him. His mouth and throat grew dryer than he would have believed possible. But eventually he reached the second house. And, for the second time, he groaned aloud.

The house was built on an island in the creek. It was connected to the end of the road by a brick causeway which, judging by its condition, was submerged at certain states of the tide. The causeway was dry enough now. The reason for Henry's groan was the large notice board that adorned it: **STRICTLY PRIVATE. TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.**

"Friendly lot of people round here!" he growled thickly. "Of all the selfish, unsociable, . . ."

Henry Downes was annoyed. More than that—he was desperate. He decided to ignore the offensive notice board entirely.

He crossed the causeway. When he reached the gate at its further end, another board inside the garden attracted his attention. **BEWARE OF THE DOG.**

Henry was normally timid with dogs. It says a good deal for the state of mind which heat and thirst had brought about in him that he decided to ignore this warning, too. He pushed open the creaking gate and strode boldly along the gravelled path that twisted among the shrubbery.

Still another notice menaced him: **BEWARE OF MAN-TRAPS.** He laughed hoarsely.

"They can't do it!" he assured himself. "They aren't do it! It's illegal."

By now he was feeling very angry. An Englishman's home might be his castle, but there was no need for all this kind of thing. Someone ought to be told about it.

He swung round a clump of rhododendrons and found himself facing the house. He halted abruptly and his anger began to dissipate. The door of the house stood wide open. Sunning itself on the threshold lay a big black dog.

It looked like a bloodhound. Henry stared at it, fascinated, expecting that at any moment it would spring to its feet and come tearing toward him. But apparently it had not heard him. It slept soundly, with a perfectly audible snore.

HE began cautiously to edge his way back along the path. It would simply be asking for trouble to waken that sleeping dog. There was another path which presumably led to the rear of the house. He would try his luck on this.

Treading gingerly in the effort to make as little noise as possible, he came at last through a small kitchen garden to the back door of the house. This, too, was open. Crossing the stone flags outside it, he knocked gently.

There was no response. He knocked again, more loudly, but no one came to the door, nor could he hear any sound of life inside. Taking a step forward, he risked a peep through the door into the kitchen beyond. He jumped back suddenly. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he stepped forward again.

Contrary to expectation, the kitchen was not empty. A stout motherly body occupied a rocking chair on the hearth. Her head drooped forward on her ample bosom. A trim parlourmaid sat near the table, leaning heavily against it. A large ginger cat lay stretched on the hearthrug. All were fast asleep.

The House of Sleep

Henry Downes's brown eyes opened wide as he stared in at the door. A curious household, this. He coughed. No one stirred.

"Excuse me," he said loudly, almost shouting. He might have saved his breath, for all that resulted.

He was wondering what to do next when he noticed the pump over the sink. Beside it was a large pint mug. The temptation was irresistible. He tiptoed to the sink, filled the mug and drained it—twice.

His action had not disturbed anybody. Perhaps it would be as well to fade away without any fuss. Feeling much refreshed, he turned back toward the door. Almost immediately he trod on something.

It was the ginger cat's tail. Instead of the usual agonized squawk, the accident elicited only the faintest of squeaks. The ginger cat stretched itself, turned over, and went to sleep again.

At this moment Henry Downes first realized that there was something wrong in the house. In the ordinary way cats strongly object to having their tails trodden on. Why was everyone asleep here? Why didn't they wake up?

A curious chill ran down Henry's back, a chill which was not in any way due to the coldness of the water he had just drunk. He cast a rather wistful glance at the open door. Then he reluctantly crossed the hearth and shook the stout cook in the stocking chair.

She moaned a little, and her lips twitched; but her eyes remained tightly closed. Definitely alarmed now, Henry transferred his attention to the trim parlormaid. The result was the same. He panted a little with his exertions, and the cold chill ran down his back again.

He stood looking at the two sleeping women in helpless bewilderment; and after a while it occurred to him that it might be a good thing to make sure whether there was anyone else in the house or not. He was on the point of calling out when he suddenly restrained himself. After all, this was not a picnic. The state of affairs looked rather sinister to him. It would be better, perhaps, not to advertise his presence, but to proceed by stealth.

There was a horrible creepy feeling at the back of his neck as he moved cautiously out of the kitchen. He told himself that he was several kinds of fool for meddling in something which was no concern of his. But he kept on along the passage until he came to two open doors facing one another. Choosing the one on the left, he gingerly peered into the room beyond.

It was the dining-room. Two men were seated at the table with the remnants of lunch before them. One was short and fat, red-faced and clean-shaven. The other was long and thin, rather pallid, with a straggling moustache. Both slept peacefully, leaning over the table. There was no sign of disorder in the room. Henry noticed that three people had partaken of the meal.

As he stared at the two sleepers it seemed to him that he heard a slight sound from the room across the passage. Turning quickly, he tiptoed to the door and looked in. Here, again, were two more sleepers. In a large armchair reclined a pleasant-faced young man. On a soft-cushioned settee lay a very beautiful girl.

His brain in a whirl, Henry stumbled into the room. He was past being surprised at what he had found. He had walked into some grotesque dream, and was now prepared for anything.

He stood looking down at the girl; and as he studied her lovely face another queer thing happened. Going back nearly forty years he remembered the old nursery story of *The Sleeping Beauty*, of the kiss that brought the princess back to life. Circumstances were very similar here. He was perhaps not much of a prince, but he had made his way by accident to this hidden castle, and found everyone under a magic spell.

Silly, of course! Utterly childish! But Henry couldn't rid himself of the idea that if he kissed this girl she would wake up. He grew hot and bothered with the thought. Kissing had no place in the routine of Downes's Drapery Emporium. It was something he was not used to. And his discomfort increased as he made out the astonishing discovery that he wanted—yes, really wanted!—to kiss this sleeping girl.

He had never wanted anything so much. He must be mad. He had fallen under the spell of this strange house. He struggled against the temptation but it was too strong for him. After a quick glance round he bent over and gently kissed the soft warm lips.

The girl did not stir. Her eyelids remained closed. Henry sighed deeply.

At this moment a very startling thing happened. "Splendid idea, old chappie!" said a quiet voice. "But it doesn't seem to have worked."

Scared out of his wits, Henry swung round. The pleasant-faced young man in the armchair had come to life, and was regarding him with a quizzical smile.

CHAPTER II

FOR a moment Henry could do no more than stare at the pleasant-faced young man in dumb amazement. Then he found his voice.

"I—I'm sorry," he stammered. "I suppose I ought not to have come in. But when I saw everyone asleep, I—"

"Don't apologize, old chappie," interrupted the young man. "I oughtn't to have come in, either."

"Then you're not—" Henry's eyes goggled. "You haven't—I mean, who are you?"

"I'm Clarence Knight, one of the Knights from Reddlesham, Suffolk, you know. Who are you?"

"Henry Downes. Downes's Drapery Emporium, Brixton." "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Downes." Mr. Clarence Knight rose from his chair, crossed the room, and shook hands solemnly. "Perhaps I may call on you some time? I sell vacuum cleaners, you know."

"Do you?" Henry's brain reeled. Somehow this conversation seemed the most fantastic part of the dream. Vacuum cleaners! With all these people asleep in this mysterious house! Surely he must wake up soon?

"Well, I try to," continued Mr. Knight, with an idiotic grin. He was about thirty-five years of age with fair wavy hair and gray eyes which looked as though they missed nothing. "I've been working hard work sometimes, old chappie. I was hoping to do a bit of business here today, but—"

"He shrugged his broad shoulders—"no one seems interested." "You mean that you called here today on business—to sell vacuum cleaners?"

"Precisely."

"You—you found everyone asleep?"

"Quite. Then I heard you coming, so I pretended to be asleep myself."

"Why?"

"Frankly, old chappie, I was scared. Downright frightened. I mean—well, there's something wrong here, isn't there?"

"There certainly is!" Henry studied the young man doubtfully. Somehow, his story about vacuum cleaners didn't carry conviction. "There's no electric light here," he added suddenly.

"I beg your pardon."

"To work the cleaners."

"Oh, quite. I sell both kinds, you know."

"Where are they?"

"I'm not a peddler, old chappie." Mr. Knight's tone was injured. "I'm a salesman. I call first to make an appointment for demonstration. Not until then do I produce my cleaners."

"Found it a long walk, didn't you?"

"I came on a bicycle."

"Didn't see any bicycle."

"Perhaps you weren't looking for one." The foolish smile spread over the young man's face again. "What were you looking for?"

Henry was still not convinced about the vacuum cleaners. He felt that Mr. Clarence Knight knew more about what was happening in this house than he pretended. Still, he realized that his own presence required some explanation, and he told the story of his search for a drink in detail.

"And now," he concluded, "what's it all about?"

"Ask me another, old chappie."

"What's wrong with these people?"

"At a guess, I'd say they've been drugged."

"Drugged! But who—why—"

"You go too fast for me, Mr. Downes." The young man shook his head thoughtfully as he gazed round the comfortably furnished room. "Beautiful girl, isn't she?"

Henry blushed. "I don't know what made me—"

"Very natural impulse, old chappie. Very natural, indeed! Funny about that house further back on the road, isn't it?"

"You mean the one that's fastened up?"

"Yes. I expect you thought it was empty. But it's occupied."

"I know."

"How you know?"

Henry explained. Mr. Knight whistled softly.

"Didn't look much like business there. Didn't look like much here, for that matter. Didn't strike me that either

The House of Sleep

house was particularly anxious to receive visitors. Did it strike you that the occupiers were frightened of something?

"No," Henry was startled. "But now you mention it—" "Both frightened of the same something, perhaps?" "It may be—" "Is this what they were frightened of?" Mr. Knight indicated the sleeping girl. "Has the long expected blow fallen?"

Henry gaped. Mr. Knight looked at him queerly. "Seen any owls about?" he asked. "Owls?" "Never mind. Have a smoke." Blindly, Henry took a cigarette from the proffered case. Mechanically, he accepted a light. He hardly knew what he was doing. He was not used to this kind of thing. It disturbed him—profoundly. Anyhow, what on earth had owls to do with a household of drugged people? "Well, what are we going to do?" he managed to say after a while. "Send for the police?"

"There's no telephone." "You've got a bicycle." "Yes," Mr. Knight grinned again. "I think it'll be easier to wait until someone wakes up." Henry sat down. He felt suddenly weary, tired out. Mr. Knight probed about the room. He paised by the sleeping girl, and raised one of her eyelids.

"Yes," he murmured, "she's been drugged." He continued his pacing. Henry watched him drowsily. After a while he darted out of the room and across the passage.

Curious how sleepy he was getting! Henry fought against an ever-increasing desire to close his eyes. It was absurd to want to sleep in such circumstances. But he could hardly raise the cigarette to his lips.

The cigarette! A moment of horrified realization brought him to his feet. The cigarette was drugged! He tossed it into the fireplace and took a step across the room. Then he tottered, and collapsed into a chair again.

In less than no time he was anxiously watching a ginger cat on a bicycle chase an owl which was flying away with a vacuum cleaner. . . .

HENRY DOWNES came back to consciousness to find that someone was shaking him vigorously. He tried to open his eyes, but the lids refused to budge. Nor would his lips frame the words he wanted to say. "Who is this fellow?" asked a loud angry voice. "What does it all mean?"

"I really don't know, sir," protested another voice, much milder, rather deferential. "You forget that I have been a victim of this—er—outrage myself."

"Can't you waken Aileen?" "Not yet, sir. Miss Porter seems quite unconscious." "It's the very devil! Look here, Wilson, there's no two ways about it. Timothy Haslam is behind this."

"I don't see who else—" "Of course you don't! It couldn't be anyone else. I don't know what his idea is, but I'm going to find out. Come on! We'll see the old scoundrel straight away."

"But Miss Porter, sir. And this man. Is it safe to—" "Oh, come on! They both look like sleeping for hours yet. We shan't be long."

"Very good, sir. Shall I take a—" "Of course you will! And see that it's loaded."

The voices ceased, and Henry could hear the two men hurry from the room. Drowsily he wondered what was going to happen to Mr. Timothy Haslam.

He tried to open his eyes, and this time he was successful. He was surprised to see the lamp burning in the room, the closely shuttered windows. How long had he been asleep?

And where was Mr. Knight? Neither of the two voices had been his. Henry sat up and looked round searchingly. The girl still slept on the settee. But there was no sign of Mr. Knight.

He rose to his feet. He felt dizzy and unsteady, but otherwise all right. He investigated his wallet, and found that his money was untouched. Why had Mr. Knight drugged him?

He managed to stumble to the door, across the passage, and look into the room opposite. There was no lamp lit in it, but sufficient light came through the open door to enable him to see that the room was empty.

He wandered back to the room and stood looking down at the girl. She had a face like a Madonna, he thought, pure, serene and lovely.

Quite suddenly she opened her eyes. Though they were heavy yet with sleep, he was thrilled by the vivid blueness of them.

"Hello!" she said doubtfully. "Hello!" said Henry. "Who are you?"

He told her. "Where's Uncle Bob? And Mr. Wilson?" "I—I think they've gone to see Mr. Haslam."

"Oh, dear! More trouble!" Sleep cleared away from the blue eyes, and Henry now decided that he had never seen a more vivacious impudent little face. "Good gracious!" The girl sat up, realizing something of the situation. "It's night! I've been asleep since lunch-time. What's the matter?"

"I don't know. You've been drugged, I think." "Drugged?" "Mr. Knight said so. He drugged me, too."

"Who's Mr. Knight?" "He sells vacuum cleaners." The blue eyes opened wide. "Am I dippy? Or are you? What are you doing here, anyway?"

Henry started to explain. He had got out only a few words when he broke off, staring. The girl's movements had disarranged her light summer frock. One white shoulder was partially exposed. And on that shoulder Henry could distinctly see a small picture of an owl.

CHAPTER III

HIS surprise was too obvious to be overlooked. "What is the matter now?" asked the girl. "Your—your shoulder," faltered Henry. "Have you seen it?"

"Good Lord! That's nothing. Have you never had a sister?" She misunderstood him and slipped the dress back into position. "I thought you'd seen a ghost!"

"But really—at the back—that owl—" "That what?"

"An owl—drawn on your shoulder." "It was necessary for the girl to stand before a mirror to see the drawing crudely executed in ink on her white flesh. She was as surprised as Henry had been.

"Well, of all the—Who's done that?" "I don't know." "What's it mean?"

Henry shook his head. "Mr. Knight asked if I'd seen any owls about."

"It wasn't there at lunch-time. Someone's done it while I've been—drugged." A trace of anxiety crept into the blue eyes. "Lordy! I wonder—"

"What?" "Nothing. Never mind." She sat down with decision. "Tell me about this Mr. Knight."

Henry resumed his story. The girl listened intently, showing a particular interest in the pretended seller of vacuum cleaners.

"So everyone in the house was drugged?" she commented. "Except Mr. Knight."

"That's right." She laughed suddenly, surprisingly, merrily. "You must have wondered what sort of a place you'd got to. Mr. Downes," she gurgled.

Henry thought he had never seen more beautiful teeth, but he didn't feel like laughing.

"I'm still wondering," he said severely. "Of course you are, you poor dear! I expect you're dying to be off, too. But you really must wait until Uncle Bob comes back so that you can tell him all about Mr. Knight."

"How long will your uncle be, Miss—I presume you are Miss Porter?"

"Yes, Aileen for short. How long's Uncle Bob been gone?"

"I should think about an hour." "He's had plenty of time to—" Miss Porter glanced at the clock, and burst out laughing again. "How scrumptious! He's forgotten all about the tide!"

"The tide?" "It's high about ten tonight. The causeway will be covered by now. He won't be able to get back."

"And I?" Henry's face lengthened. "Can't I get across—"

"Oh, I'll take you over in the boat. What say? Shall we go now? A spot of fresh air wouldn't do us any harm. We can walk along the road until we meet Uncle Bob."

She broke off suddenly as a piercing scream came from

The House of Sleep

somewhere in the house, followed immediately by another. "G-good Lord!" Henry faltered. "What's that?"

"That's Kate," said Miss Porter practically. "Hysterics. Come on!"

She dashed from the room with Henry padding heavily after her. In the kitchen they found the motherly cook trying to calm the trim parlormaid.

"What's the trouble, Susan?" asked Miss Porter. "I dunno, Mum." The cook patted the parlormaid's hand as though it were a piece of dough. "We was sittin' 'ere talkin', like, when all of a sudden she 'ollers out, near scarin' me out of me wits. An' I can't make 'ead nor tail—"

"Come now, Kate! Tell me what's the matter." "I—I want to go home," sobbed the maid brokenly. "I daren't stay here—it's a horrible place. I want to go home. I—I'm frightened. There's something wrong. Why did everyone sleep all afternoon? That's what I want to know. And there was a face looking in at the window—"

HENRY glanced at the window. It was quite dark outside, and he could see nothing but the reflection of the kitchen in the glass. He crossed over with the uncomfortable feeling that someone was watching him from outside. Rather hastily, he fastened the shutters over the window.

"He was a murderer, I'm sure!" Kate's voice was rising to a scream again. "Black shining eyes! Yellow teeth! And a horrible scar down one side of his face. I saw him looking at me. Then he disappeared and—"

"Just a tramp, probably, who lost his way."

"Why didn't Rover bark at him? Why should he look at me like that? Oh—oh—"

"Never mind, Kate. You'll be all right now. Mr. Downes has fastened the shutters and—"

"I want to go home. I want to go home. . . ."

It took some time to calm the terrified girl. When her hysterical sobbing had quieted into comparative silence, Aileen Porter led the way from the kitchen.

"I wonder if she did see someone," she mused, halting in the passage.

"Wouldn't the dog—"

"That's what makes me think she must have imagined it. Rover's a good house dog. Kicks up a terrific shindy if anyone comes, though he's perfectly harmless."

"He was drugged, too, you know," said Henry, looking on the black side, and feeling far from happy. "Perhaps he hasn't recovered yet."

"Or perhaps Uncle Bob took him along. Yes, on the whole I should say Kate did see someone. She's quite a sensible girl as a rule. Well, what's the next step, Mr. Downes? How does this affect us? Do we carry out our original plan? Or do you think we ought to stay here?"

Henry looked into the eager young face so close to his, and sighed. He didn't want to go out into the darkness one little bit. It was safer and more comfortable inside.

"Just as you like," he said.

"If there is someone hanging about in the garden it might be better—" Aileen stopped short, wide eyes fixed on the door. And Henry, following the direction of her gaze, shivered.

A dark ominous pool was creeping under the door, spreading out widely on the tiled floor of the hall.

"That's—blood, isn't it?" breathed the girl.

"Looks like it," agreed Henry, almost inaudibly.

"Come on! Let's see."

Aileen opened the door with a jerk. She stood rigid, her hand on the knob, her blue eyes hardening.

"The devil!" she muttered hoarsely. "Oh, the filthy cruel devils!"

The lamplight shone through the door. Stretched on the wide step outside lay the body of the big black dog. Its throat had been cut.

"I can't somehow believe," Henry began uncertainly, "that Mr. Knight would—"

There was a whirring sound, and something whizzed past his ear, thudding into the woodwork of the door. Turning breathlessly, he saw a long slender knife, still quivering with the force of its impact.

Suddenly grabbing Aileen, he pushed her back into the hall, and slammed the door. A moment later he opened it again, pulled the knife out of the wood, then slammed it once more. And this time he locked it.

"Heavens!" he gasped. "That was a— a nasty experience!"

The girl looked at him curiously. "Why trouble to bring the knife in?"

"It may possibly be some measure of protection."

"In case of—"

"Well, we know there's someone out there now, don't we? They may try to get in."

"And you're going to try to keep them out?"

"Why, of course! We don't want treating like that poor dog, do we?"

Aileen laughed brokenly, a queer little laugh with a hint of tears in it.

"I rather like you, Mr. Downes. You're a sport!"

Henry blushed. In all his forty years he didn't remember anyone calling him a sport before. And he knew he didn't deserve it. He wasn't a sport really. He was just a very frightened little draper from Brixton. But it sounded rather nice.

"I—I think I'd better go around," he stammered, sticking the knife into his belt, and see that all the windows and doors are securely fastened."

"You're quite sure that we're in for a siege, then?"

"I don't know," said Henry for perhaps the twentieth time. His voice grew firmer. "But there's one thing I do know—neither you nor I must wander out into that garden while there's a desperate criminal there throwing knives about."

"Okay, chief!" smiled Aileen shakily. "We'll see to our defences."

They walked round from room to room, making sure that the windows were closed. Luckily, both shutters and doors were sturdy, and could be bolted securely.

"And that's that," said Henry as they returned to the lounge. "No one can get in now—at least without giving us good warning. I suppose we needn't bother going round upstairs."

"I don't think so."

"Then what do we do next?"

"Supper," said Aileen. "I'm hungry. Sit down. I'll see what Susan can do for us."

Left to himself, Henry sat down. Perhaps a cigarette would do him good, soothe his unsteady nerves. He lit one, and lay back in his chair, trying to make some sense of the situation.

He hadn't the faintest idea what was happening. All he knew was that somehow danger threatened; and that whatever the reason for it all might be, he had dropped into it. So far as he could see, he was here for the night, part and parcel of this mysterious household, a target for murderous knives, a victim of circumstances he did not understand.

Useless to pretend that the prospect pleased him! The Drapery Emporium at Brixton had never seemed more alluring. And yet he was conscious of a strange exhilaration, a kind of don't-care madness very foreign to his usual prim temperament.

He had forgotten that forty is the dangerous age; and he went hot all over as he suddenly remembered how he had tried to waken Aileen Porter. . . . She returned, followed by the parlormaid carrying a supper tray.

CHAPTER IV

"YOU'D better go to bed, Kate," said Aileen. "If Mr. Porter wants anything when he comes in, I'll see about it. Put a hot-water bottle in the spare room, please. Mr. Downes is staying the night."

"Very well, Miss." The maid hesitated. She was still rather pale and shaky. "Is—is it safe to go to bed, Miss?"

"It is safe, Henry?"

"Of course!" snapped Henry, wishing he were snugly between sheets behind a locked door. "It's always safe in bed!"

Aileen handed him a cup of coffee.

"You're rather enjoying your little self, aren't you?" she smiled as the maid went out.

"I can't say that I am." He remembered something, and he watched her closely as he spoke. "It might be more comfortable if you explained what is going on."

"I explain? Good Lord, man! I haven't the faintest idea."

"You know something about it."

"Do I?"

"You know, for instance, who Mr. Haslam is, and why your uncle should consider him responsible for the drug-

ging. You know something about that drawing of an owl on your shoulder."

"Yes, I suppose I gave that away." Aileen smiled at him again. "You don't miss much, Henry, do you? I

The House of Sleep

didn't want to say anything about it before because—well, it was none of your business. But you've insisted on getting yourself mixed up in it," the blue eyes twinkled again, "so I might as well tell you all I know."

"It's mighty little, anyhow. Have another sandwich. First about Mr. Haslam. He lives in that house half a mile down the road. I expect you saw it—all shuttered and locked up."

"Yes, I saw it. I decided it must be occupied by a lunatic."

"And then you came on here and saw all our notice boards? Gee! It must have seemed funny to you. And it is funny, really, when you know the reason."

"Uncle Bob and Mr. Haslam were partners in business. Stock-brokers in rather a big way, with offices in Colchester and London. They quarrelled—I'll tell you what about in a minute—and dissolved partnership. They both retired from business and came to live where they could devote themselves exclusively to the prosecution of the feud between them. It's a very bitter affair, I can assure you. Our notice boards were put up specially for Mr. Haslam's benefit. His house is locked up merely to keep Uncle Bob out."

"Sounds crazy to me," muttered Henry. "It is crazy—absolutely! They're both a bit dippy—just on this one subject. They've nothing else to do, you know. Like a couple of kids playing at pirates."

"But surely they don't carry this feud of theirs to the extent of dragging—"

"Of course they don't!"

"Your uncle seemed very sure—"

"I've told you he's dippy. It would be the first explanation to come into his mind, and he'd act on it without stopping to think. I'm perfectly certain Mr. Haslam never did a thing like that. He's quite a darling, really."

"Who did drag you, then?"

"Who dragged you, Henry?"

"Heavens! Do you think that Mr. Knight—"

"Listen! I'll tell you the rest. The quarrel between Uncle Bob and Mr. Haslam was due to a burglary. It's just over a year ago now. About fifty thousand pounds worth of bonds were stolen from the safe in their London office. Each blamed the other because the bonds had been left in the safe instead of being deposited in a bank. Each considered the other responsible, see?"

"Yes. But I don't see what this has got to do with Mr. Knight."

"Well, the burglary was committed by a notorious criminal called 'The Owl'—"

"I say!"

"He left a card in the safe. With a little picture of an owl drawn on it. The police told us he always did this. They told us a lot more about him, too—what a clever chap he was, and all that kind of thing. But they didn't catch him."

"And you think—"

"This is certainly a picture of an owl on my shoulder, isn't it? His signature, so to speak."

"But why should he come here? What's he after?"

"That's something I don't know. I've told you all I can."

They were silent for a while. Henry absent-mindedly sipped at his coffee. It had gone cold.

Suddenly, breaking in on the stillness with startling abruptness, a bell jangled somewhere in the house.

CHAPTER V

AILEEN'S eyes opened wide as she stared at Henry. "That's the front door bell," she whispered.

"What shall we do?"

"We'd better open it, hadn't we?"

"Wait!" Henry's cup clattered in its saucer as he laid it down. "Your uncle wouldn't ring?"

"No."

"And no one can cross the causeway?"

"Not till the tide goes out."

"Then it must be someone who's been hanging about outside for a long time."

"Yes, I see what you mean. Perhaps we'd better not take any notice."

The bell jangled again. And again. Its effect was more startling with each repetition.

"We can't go on like this," muttered Henry. He had a brainwave. "I say! Can I have the cord from that picture?"

"Sure. Why?"

"I've thought of something. Just an idea. It'll be all

right if there's only one of them at the door. Shall we risk it?"

"If you will, I will."

Henry detached the cord from the picture, made a running noose in one end, and stole quietly to the front door as the bell rang once more.

"Who's there?" he called.

"Oh, is that you, old chappie?" replied a familiar voice.

"Mind if I come in a minute?"

"Mr. Knight!" Henry whispered to Aileen. He called again: "What do you want?"

"I want to see the lady of the house."

"She doesn't require a vacuum cleaner."

"Isn't that, old chappie. I've got a present for her."

Henry glanced enquiringly at Aileen who was listening intently. She nodded.

"The last time I opened this door," he said, "someone threw a knife at me."

"Deuced bad manners," agreed Mr. Knight's voice. "And someone's made quite a nasty mess out here."

"You'll understand that we're not taking any more risks," continued Henry. He considered that he was doing very well in the circumstances. "You'll have to show your bona fides."

"And how do I do that?"

"I'll open the door a little way. You'll put both your hands through so that we can see there's no knife or any kind of weapon in them."

"Good enough for me. Carry on."

HOLDING the cord in readiness, Henry waited while Aileen drew the bolt and unlocked the door. His feet

were braced against the floor to prevent the door being suddenly flung wide. As it slowly opened, two hands came into view, one above the other. With really remarkable celerity he slipped the noose over them, and drew the cord tight. At the same moment he jammed the door against the intruding arms, holding them motionless until he had securely fastened the wrists together. Wrapping the cord round his own hand to prevent any violent pull jerking it away, he opened the door more widely.

"You can see now," he said, snatching the knife from his belt. "But don't try any tricks."

Mr. Knight did not try any tricks. He neither charged forward nor tried to escape. Instead he strolled in without hurry, grinning amiably at his bound wrists.

"Cute little wheeze," he said, as Aileen looked and bolted the door behind him. "Your idea, old chappie?"

"Yes," said Henry curly.

"Might not have worked so well with someone else, of course. In fact with some people I know it would have been positively dangerous. However, all's well that ends well, as Mr. What's-his-name says. I see you've managed to waken the lady up at last. Nothing like perseverance, old chappie."

"Shut up!" snapped Henry, reddening. "Come in here."

He led his captive into the lounge. Aileen followed, watching Mr. Knight with interest. She helped Henry fasten him into a chair with more picture cord.

He made no attempt at resistance.

"Rousing reception you're giving me," he said cheerfully.

"'Tisn't often people grow so fond of me all at once."

"We want to ask you a few questions," said Aileen. She sat down facing him. "Why did you drug us all this afternoon?"

"I didn't."

"It's no use denying it," Henry broke in. "No one else could possibly have drugged me."

"And how did I drug you, old chappie?"

"You know quite well. The cigarette you gave me—"

"The cigarette! I see now! I wondered why you blamed me."

Mr. Knight's gray eyes narrowed as they focussed on the half-smoked cigarette still lying on the hearth. "That's the remains of it, isn't it?"

Henry picked it up. "Yes."

"Well, put it in my mouth. Light it. If it drugged you it should drug me, eh?"

"I suppose so."

Both Henry and Aileen watched the experiment with excitement. Mr. Knight puffed regularly at the cigarette, smoking it to the end. It had not the slightest effect on him.

"Satisfied?" he inquired.

"I can't understand that," murmured Henry puzzled. "If I wasn't drugged that way, how can I be?"

"I'll tell you, old chappie. You were drugged in precisely

The House of Sleep

the same way as everyone else in the house. When I came back into the room and found you fast asleep, it gave me quite a nasty jar. I couldn't see how it had been done, because I knew you'd only just come into the house and started thinking about poison gas, and all sorts of queer things like that. Made me quite nervous, I can assure you. Then I remembered that you'd helped yourself to a drink of water from the pump. I went to have a look at this, and found the solution to the problem. There's a filter under the sink, as you know, Miss Porter. Someone had opened this and placed inside it a fair quantity of a harmless but powerful sedative which poisons gas, rather slowly in water. Everyone in the house had been dosing himself during the morning with this doctored water. Mr. Downes got only the fag end of it, which explains why his sleep didn't last so long as the others."

Henry looked at Aileen.

"THAT must be right," he said slowly. "It's the only possible explanation of what happened to me."
"Yes," she agreed, "it may be so. But we don't know that our friend here didn't monkey with the filter." She turned back to Mr. Knight. "What were you doing in the house?"

"Hasn't Mr. Downes told you about my vacuum cleaners?"

"Yes, he has! And I don't believe a word of it!"

Mr. Knight grinned. "I hardly thought you would. But it was the best excuse I could think of on the spur of the moment."

He sat forward suddenly. And Henry saw with amazement that the prisoner was free. He saw also the tiny silver-plated revolver that had magically appeared in his hand.

"You're not too good at tying knots, old chap," he went on. "I'll give you a lesson some time. Forgive me if I appear in rather a hurry just now. There's work to be done."

He rose from the chair and poured himself a cup of coffee.

"You think I'm The Owl, Miss Porter," he continued. "I don't—but I don't expect you to believe it. Appearances are rather against me." He drank the coffee. "We must get a move on. I said I had a present for you. You'd better come with me—both of you—and collect it."

Neither Henry nor Aileen stirred.

"Quickly! Please!" he said.

There was a new quality in his voice, a sternness that commanded respect. Aileen slowly rose to her feet. The revolver turned toward Henry, and he jumped to attention by her side.

"Open the door, please," Mr. Knight commanded. "There's no danger—at present. Bring that electric torch with you." In view of the revolver, it seemed foolish to argue. Henry walked slowly to the door with Aileen close at his heels. Mr. Knight brought up the rear.

"Keep to the left," he said as they passed through the door into the darkness of the night outside. And after a few steps: "Show your light on that bush."

The circle of light disclosed the body of a man lying beneath the bush. It also disclosed the fact that he was securely bound and gagged.

"My knots are a trifle better than yours," chuckled Mr. Knight. "He doesn't show any sign of getting loose."

"Who is this?" asked Aileen.

"The little present I mentioned, Miss Porter. Have you anywhere you can—er—store him?"

"What do you mean?"

"He's rather a dangerous gentleman—and he may have friends of the same calibre about. He's quite adequately fastened up, but I'd feel more comfortable if he were under lock and key."

"We could put him in a cellar. But—"

"Carry him in, please. I'd do it myself, but you might try to fuss me up again."

Henry felt bewildered, and he guessed that the girl was equally uncertain. They both hesitated to follow these instructions. For all they knew, they might be helping The Owl to carry out his mysterious plans.

"Quickly, please!" said Mr. Knight again. And for the second time that stern quality in his voice commanded obedience.

They carried the prisoner into the house. As they passed under the hall lamp Aileen noticed the scar down one side of his ugly face, the fierce brutal eyes.

"Why?" she cried. "It's the man Kate saw looking in at the window!"

"You are quite right, in that conclusion, Miss Porter." "Is he The Owl?"

"Hardly. He's just an underling. But he's responsible for killing your dog, and throwing that knife at you."

"You seem to know everything that has happened."

"I ought to," admitted Mr. Knight. "I've been here all the time." He advanced to the top of the stairs leading down to the cellars, and flashed the torch. "Do you mind if I hurry you? There isn't much time to spare."

By the light of the torch, the captive was carried down the stone steps and deposited in an empty wine-cellar the door of which had a strong though rusty lock.

"He should be out of mischief now," said Mr. Knight, locking the door and dropping the key in his pocket. "I'm not frightened of him releasing himself. And I don't think anyone but we three knows what has happened to him, so we needn't fear his friends."

They returned to the hall.

"What does he want? What was he doing here? Why did he—"

"He wouldn't say," grinned Mr. Knight. "I asked him."

"But you know something about him, don't you? You're not what you pretend—"

"I know just this." The foolish grin vanished completely from Mr. Knight's pleasant face, leaving it strangely stern.

"I know that you're in grave danger. The whole business is typical of The Owl's methods. He always aims at terrifying his victims before he strikes."

"And dragging them?"

"No. That's something I can't fathom yet. But since then—the drawing on your shoulder which I heard you discussing the night at the window, the flung knife—all calculated to frighten you. He's a very wise old bird."

"But why should The Owl come here? What does he want?"

Mr. Knight thrust his face close to the girl's, and looked deep into her worried blue eyes.

"Don't you know, Miss Porter?"

"No, I don't! Honestly! I haven't the faintest idea."

"Then I'll have to find out somewhere else," Mr. Knight turned toward the door. "Don't go out. Lock the door and keep it locked. Don't open to anyone but me." His gray eyes twinkled. "And don't pay too much attention to friend Henry's brainwaves, or they may land you into very serious trouble."

The next moment he was gone.

CHAPTER VI

WELL, that's a devil!" said Aileen.

Henry didn't approve of young ladies using strong language, but he felt that the present was hardly a propitious moment for protest.

"Rather!" he agreed.

"He makes you do things, doesn't he?"

"He made us."

"He admitted that he wasn't a vacuum salesman. And I don't believe now that he's anything to do with The Owl. I'll bet he's a detective!"

"I shouldn't be surprised," agreed Henry. He was so puzzled and bewildered that he would have agreed to anything.

"But I wish I knew what it was all about." The girl's bright eager face became worried. "And I wish I knew what has happened to Uncle Bob."

"He'll be all right," said Henry, without much confidence. "He had someone with him."

"Wilson—yes. I don't like Wilson much."

"Who is he?"

"Sort of secretary to Uncle Bob. Waits on him hand and foot."

"They took the revolver with them."

"Hell!" Aileen jumped. "Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"I've only just remembered. And it's all to the good, isn't it? Protection against—"

"It's all to the bad. Uncle Bob's not fit to carry a gun. He's quite capable of shooting Mr. Haslam. And Wilson daren't say no to him about anything."

They returned to the lounge. Aileen was restless and uneasy. She paced about the room so quickly that Henry grew dizzy with watching her.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," he complained. "You make me nervous."

"It's no good!" She stopped suddenly. "I'll have to go!"

"Where?"

The House of Sleep

"After Uncle Bob. I've got to find him."
"Oh, I know! He also said that there was no danger at present. Where's he gone, anyhow?"

A silly question to ask, thought Henry. He was not Mr. Knight's keeper—thank goodness!

"If it's safe for him it's safe for me," Aileen went on, "I'm going!"

"Very well," Henry agreed reluctantly. "But I hope we're not being foolish."

On the far side of the kitchen garden, a small boat-house was built among the willows. They stole toward this, instinctively making as little noise as possible. Inside it was a sailing dinghy with a little outboard motor attached.

"Mr. Knight's evidently taken the other," said Aileen, unhitching the painter. "We won't start the motor in case anyone is about. We'd better just cross the creek and walk on the road, don't you think? We might meet Uncle Bob there."

"All right," agreed Henry, helping to push the boat out. It did not take long to row around the little island and reach the far side of the creek. They fastened the boat carefully to a post, and set off at a brisk pace along the road.

They reached their destination without further speech. The gates were padlocked as Henry had seen them before. The house showed up dimly among the surrounding trees. They could see no light anywhere in its black bulk.

Aileen pulled at the old-fashioned bell beside the gate. They could hear the creaking of the wire, but not the ringing of the bell itself. After waiting a few moments, she pulled again.

A door closed gently in the distance. The gravel path crunched softly under the feet of someone cautiously approaching. Then a quavering high-pitched voice called:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

"Hello, Mr. Haslam! This is Aileen Porter. I'm looking for Uncle Bob."

There was a perceptible pause before the voice said: "He isn't here."

"But he came here, Mr. Haslam. Over two hours ago."
"I know he did. He'd got some kind of bee in his bonnet, so I sent him back with a flea in his ear!"

"Kind of insects, aren't you? Come on—tell me all about it. He hasn't come home, you know."

"He will. He'll turn up in the morning like the bad penny he is." The voice developed a wheezy chuckle. "Take my word for it, my dear. He'll turn up."

"And Wilson?"

"Wilson's with him, wherever he is."

"What did he say to you when—"

"I'm sorry I can't stay to talk to you, my dear. I'll catch my death of cold. Night air never did agree with me. Run along back to bed, and don't worry about your precious uncle. He'll turn up in the morning. Good-night, my dear. Good-night."

The gravel crunched again, more loudly. The distant door closed with a perceptible slam. Aileen stared through the gate.

"What do you think about that?" she asked at last.

"I don't know you, Mr. Haslam," said Aileen judiciously, "but it seemed to me that he was—"

"Of course he was! You've got ideas, Henry, if you'd only allow them to emerge. He was lying. He knows perfectly well where Uncle Bob is."

"That's what I thought. And I'd go further than that. I got the very definite impression—"

"You do take some time to spit it out. You mean that Uncle Bob is in that house?"

"Mr. Haslam was so very sure about him turning up in the morning—"

"That's right. You've hit the nail right on the head, Henry. I'll bet a quid he's in there."

"A prisoner?"

"Probably. I'm going to try to get in."

Delighted with his unsuspected powers of deduction, Henry was quite willing to help to verify them.

"How do you propose to do that?"

"Heaven knows! We may find an open window, or something of the kind. Failing that, we'll have to tempt Mr. Haslam out again, and slip in while his back's turned. We'll manage it somehow. Come on! Let's shin over this wall."

"There's barbed wire on the top."

"I know." Aileen took off her coat and flung it on to the top of the wall. "If we're careful we'll be all right."

The climbing of the wall did not present much difficulty. Once over, they examined the first window they came to, and it was evident that they were going to have difficulty in finding a way into the house. The window was covered by a strong wooden shutter, secured by sturdy iron bolts which fastened inside.

Somewhat disheartened, they set off on a cautious circuit of the house. They passed window after window, safely guarded in the same way. It seemed that they would have to try their plan of tempting Mr. Haslam to open a door.

And then fortune favored them. At the back of the house they discovered a small window near to the ground. Evidently its function was to admit light to a cellar beneath the kitchen. It had been protected by iron bars, but for some reason the bars had been cut away. And the window itself was open.

"Crums!" breathed Aileen. "We're in luck!"

Henry was doubtful. It occurred to him that this invitation to enter might be a trap, but he knew they would have to risk it.

"I'll get in first," he said, wishing himself a thousand miles away, "then I can give you a hand."

It was easy to slip through the window feet first. For a moment he hung there, clutching the remains of the iron bars, fully expecting that someone would grab his legs. But nothing happened. He let go of the bars. The drop was not more than a few inches.

"All right!" he said. "Come on!"

Aileen followed without hesitation. He caught her round the waist and set her gently on her feet.

"Splendid!" he murmured. "No noise at all."

He turned away from the little window. Almost immediately he stumbled over something on the floor, something soft and yielding that could only be the body of a man.

CHAPTER VII

FOR one frenzied second Henry thought that he must scream. Then he managed to suppress the momentary panic, and clutched Aileen's arm.

"The light!" he gasped. "The light!"

She flashed the torch. His beam disclosed a stout rubicund man lying on the stone floor, bound and gagged.

"Ye gods!" she exclaimed. "It's Uncle Bob!"

The prisoner's fat jolly face was an alarming color, livid. When they hurriedly removed the gag from his mouth, they discovered that his condition was due to anger rather than suffocation.

"My soul and body!" he exploded at once. "When I get my hands on Timothy Haslam—"

"Sh!" warned Aileen, unfastening the rope round his legs. "Not so much noise."

"And Wilson, too! I'll break his—"

"Don't talk until we get out of here."

It took quite a while to remove the various bonds. Robert Porter groaned as he scrambled stiffly to his feet.

"A hell of a row!" he went on, rubbing his cramped limbs. "Someone's going to pay for this! Of all the—"

"For the love of Mike, do be quiet! We've got to get out of here without being heard."

"Get out? Run away? Not me! I'm going to find Timothy Haslam and—"

"You're going to do nothing of the kind, Uncle Bob. You're coming straight home with us. Now don't argue. There's trouble enough without you making it worse. We'll tell you all about it as we go home."

Aileen flashed the torch round. They were in a bare stone cellar with a strong wooden door.

"Cellars seem popular tonight," she murmured. She tried the door; it was locked. "We'll have to get out through the window."

Getting out was not quite so easy as getting in. Springing up, Henry managed to grip the sill of the window. The others pushed, and he scrambled through. He gave a hand to Aileen, and she followed easily enough. Between them, they hauled the reluctant Uncle Bob up without accident, though there was only just enough room for him to pass between the remains of the iron bars.

The house was still dark and silent. Evidently Mr. Haslam's suspicions had not been roused. They hurried through the neglected garden, climbed the wall at the same place, and retrieved Aileen's coat. When they stood together in the road, she formally introduced the two men.

"Mr. Downes is a sport," she told her uncle. "He's been awfully nice to me. I don't know what I'd have done without him. Listen to me. Then you can have your say."

The House of Sleep

As they walked back along the road she gave a detailed description of everything that had happened at the house since Robert Porter left. He listened with growing incredulity.

"Are you pulling my leg?" he snorted when she had finished. "Is this some sort of silly joke?"

"You should know better than I," she replied tartly. "You've probably met this Mr. Knight before."

"Never!"

"Well, you must have some idea what The Owl is after—in your own house."

"I haven't the faintest notion. I've not heard a word about The Owl since the burglary. By heck!" Porter stopped abruptly. "I'll bet he's working in conjunction with Timothy Haslam!"

"Whatever makes you think that?"

"IT'S only just struck me. You know that Timothy Haslam was responsible for those bonds being left in the safe. Just so that The Owl could steal 'em, eh? It's never occurred to me before, but now it's plain as a pikestaff. They're in collusion. And tonight—when The Owl's got some more dirty work to do, Haslam fastens me up in his cellar to keep me out of the way."

"But you went to his house of your own accord, Uncle Bob."

"Of course I did! He knew I'd go. He knew I'd guess who'd drugged us all, and hurry there to have it out with him. He planned it all out. Isn't that perfectly clear, Mr. Downes?"

"It sounds rather—er—theoretical to me," said Henry apologetically. "You see, you haven't told us yet just what that happened to you."

"Haven't I? No, of course I haven't! Well, I'll tell you now. And then perhaps you can tell me what's become of that priceless fool, Wilson."

Robert Porter's voice had risen, and somehow Henry knew that his face was growing purple with anger again.

"We walked straight to Haslam's," he went on, "and I don't mind admitting that I was a bit annoyed. Anyone would be, I think, after his whole household had been drugged. The old devil came to his gate and jeered at us. He got my monkey up, as he always does, and I pulled out a revolver."

"As soon as I saw this, he changed his attitude. He was scared stiff, I can tell you. Wouldn't I come in? And Wilson, too? If I'd put that gun away and be friendly, he'd tell me everything he could."

"And you fell for it?" laughed Aileen.

"Don't interrupt. It's easy enough to be wise after the event. I thought it was all right. Never guessed that he was such a double-dyed scoundrel. He unlocked the gate, took us into his house, and insisted that we should have a drink. I watched him deuced carefully while he was mixing it, I can tell you. I wasn't going to be drugged again. But everything seemed to be all right. He had one himself."

"Then he said he'd something to show me privately. He took me out of the room and down to the cellars. I followed him like a lamb to the slaughter, never suspecting anything. My soul and body. When I got my hands on him! Before I knew what was happening he had me on the floor with a rope round my neck. If I struggled he pulled it tight. I had to lie quiet while he fastened me up."

"He left me in that cellar, and returned in a few minutes with Wilson. What he'd told him I don't know, but I expect he'd played the same trick. Anyhow, Wilson was fastened up just as I was. Timothy put some more ropes round us. 'You'll have a chance of cooling off here,' he said, grinning all over his ugly face. 'You may have learned some sense by morning.' Then he took himself and his candle out, locking the door behind him."

"Well, we just lay there. We couldn't do anything else—not even talk. I got sore and stiff. And there were rats! Lord! When I see Tim Haslam again I'll—"

"Go on, Uncle Bob. What happened next?"

"I can't say how long we'd been lying there when I saw a light at the window. It was an electric torch; and after flashing round a bit, the light was directed straight through the window on to us. Then it focussed on the iron bars, and the man outside started cutting through."

"It took him a deuce of a time. When the job was done, he forced the window catch and slipped through. He directed his light onto each of us as though trying to make up his mind who we were. But he never spoke a word. And I couldn't see any more of him than a dark shadow behind the light."

"You don't know who he was, then?" inquired Aileen. "Even now?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"I'll bet it was Mr. Knight," said Henry suddenly.

"Why do you think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. But it—well, it sounds like him, somehow."

"It couldn't have been Mr. Knight," objected Aileen. "He was in the house with us at that time."

"Well, whoever it was," Robert Porter went on, "he played me a dirty trick. After looking at us for a while, he seemed to decide what he wanted to do. Bending down he cut the rope around Wilson's feet. He left his arms fastened, and the gag in his mouth. Still without speaking, he helped Wilson to get up, lifted him to the window and literally pushed him through. Then he climbed through himself."

"I waited, quite unconcerned, expecting him to come back to me. After a while, it began to dawn on me that he wasn't coming back. And he didn't! Nothing more happened until you came along."

They walked on in silence. The moon was now swinging higher into the sky, bathing the deserted countryside with warm light. The road showed white and empty before them. In the distance they could see the black blob of their boat on the water. Apart from themselves, nothing seemed to be stirring.

"Don't you think," Henry suggested again as they reached the boat, "that one of us should go for the police?"

"Sure!" agreed Porter. "We'll give 'em another half-hour, in case Wilson did go for them. If they don't turn up by then, either you or I'll have to take a long walk. In the meantime I'd like to see if I recognize this fellow with the scar."

They rowed back to the boathouse. The second boat was still missing. They walked through the garden without seeing any sign of an intruder. But when they reached the house a little shock awaited them. The door stood ajar.

"I'm sure I locked it," said Aileen. "And here's the key—in my pocket."

"Easy enough for a crook to pick that lock," muttered Porter. "It's quite a simple pattern."

There was nothing disturbed inside, no indication that anyone had been in. Before the men could stop her, Aileen slipped upstairs. She returned in a moment to report that the two mads were all right and had heard nothing.

"Perhaps the prisoner's escaped," suggested Henry anxiously. "Shall I see?"

"We'll keep together," said Porter. His red jolly face had become serious. He felt in his pocket and withdrew a revolver. "Thank the Lord! Tim Haslam forgot to take this from me."

They went down the stone stairs to the cellars.

"He's gone!" cried Aileen as soon as they turned the corner at the bottom. The door of the cellar in which Mr. Knight had locked their prisoner was open.

"No, he hasn't!" said Henry, flashing the torch in. "He's still here! Fastened up and—"

He stopped abruptly. The man who lay trussed up on the floor was not the man with the scar.

"It's Wilson!" exclaimed Porter. "My soul and body! How in the name of creation has he got—"

And he, too, broke off with a stifled exclamation. As they drew nearer, the light disclosed that Wilson was dead, his throat cut from ear to ear. It also showed a small white card pinned to his breast, a card bearing a rough drawing of an owl.

For a moment they all stared in stupefied amazement. Then, before they had recovered their wits, pandemonium broke out in the distance.

A shot rang out with startling suddenness. This was followed immediately by the spluttering of a motorboat. Several voices yelled loudly, and more shots penetrated the noise. The exhaust of the boat settled into a steady roar which grew rapidly louder.

And abruptly, all was silence again.

CHAPTER VIII

ROBERT PORTER'S heavy jaw dropped, and his broad red face paled a little.

"What the devil's that?" he muttered.

"We'd better hurry," said Henry nervously. "We left the door open."

They ran upstairs to the hall. In the dim light of the lamp it appeared just as they had left it, empty, undis-

The House of Sleep

turbed, with the door still swinging slightly ajar. Aileen looked out. "Crums!" she exclaimed. "There's something doing now!"

The two men peered over her shoulders. In the moonlight they could distinctly see several dark figures moving about on the far bank of the creek.

They closed the door and shot the heavy bolt.

The frightened faces of Kate and Susan appeared in the gloom at the top of the stairs.

"Go back to bed," Aileen told them. "Everything's all right. Nothing to worry about."

Hardly had the two maids disappeared than the door-bell jangled suddenly.

"Who's that?" roared Porter, startled.

"A friend," came a familiar voice from outside. "Can I come in?"

"Mr. Knight!" exclaimed Henry.

"That's right, old chappie. Open up. I've got another little present for you."

AILEEN opened the door and Mr. Knight walked in. Over his shoulder was slung the bound and gagged figure of a man.

"My soul and body!" cried Porter. "It's Tim Haslam!" "Guessed it first time," Mr. Knight laid his captive gently on an oak settee. "Mind if I go upstairs and see what our friends across the water are doing?"

"Who are they?"

"Gentle, timid little creatures! Creatures of The Owl. I fancy we're in for a spot of bother."

"But what—?"

"Let's go upstairs. I'd like to keep an eye on them."

Mr. Knight was evidently in a hurry. He took the stairs three at a time. The others followed him helter-skelter into a small bedroom over the hall. As he opened the window to look out, they could see the silver-plated revolver glittering in his hand.

"Good!" he murmured, gazing across the creek. "They haven't a boat handy. They're held up for a little while."

"They're going to attack the house?" asked Aileen incredulously.

"I think so."

"But that's absurd!" cried Porter. "I never heard such rubbish! Why on earth—?"

"You ought to know better than I, old chappie. It's your house."

Mr. Knight was watching the distant figures closely. They were gathered together near the water edge, apparently holding some sort of consultation.

"It might help," he went on, "if you told me what The Owl is after."

"I haven't the faintest idea," snapped Porter angrily. "And I don't know who you are, or why you should come barging into my house like this."

"That's easily explained," grinned Mr. Knight. "I came back here because it was the safest place I knew."

"I wish you'd be sensible," said Aileen, "and tell us what you've been doing."

"Your wish is granted without hesitation, little lady. When I left the house I thought it was high time the police were informed of the probability that a few unpleasant murders would be committed round here tonight. I borrowed one of your boats and rowed up the creek to a spot near Mr. Haslam's house where I had left my bicycle."

"I mounted my trusty steed and rode off. I had just passed the house when I caught sight of two of our friends hiding in the bushes a little way ahead. I also saw the moonlight glinting on something that reminded me of a revolver."

"I didn't like the look of them at all, so I fell off my bicycle into the bushes. Crouching there, I drew my gun and waited for the fun."

"Believe me, nothing happened! Those two men hidden a little further on the road treated me with complete disdain. I knew they'd see me, and at first I couldn't understand their unconcern. Then it dawned on me that their orders were not to interfere with anything that went on, but simply to prevent anyone passing along the road. I didn't feel like trying that."

"The bicycle didn't seem much use to me now. Leaving it where it was, I crawled back to the boat. I thought I'd better investigate the other bank of the creek."

"You couldn't land there," said Porter. "It's all marsh."

"So I discovered. I explored pretty thoroughly; and my only consolation for the wasted time was the knowledge that all the Owl's little party must be on one side of the creek. Rather comforting now," Mr. Knight indicated

the men still talking on the water side, "to know that they can't get round to attack us in the rear."

"You still haven't told us why you brought Tim Haslam here."

"I'm coming to that. When I'd convinced myself that the only way of reaching the village was by the road, I decided that we'd have to manage as well as we could without the police. I wanted to find out what had become of you and Mr. Wilson, so I rowed back across the creek, and tied the boat up among the bushes opposite Mr. Haslam's house."

"I'd only just done this when three people hopped over the wall from the garden. I was rather surprised, you know, because I'd understood that you two were going to remain in the house until I returned. However, there you were trotting down the road with Uncle Bob, and I couldn't help wondering what had happened to Wilson."

"Mr. Haslam seemed the likeliest person to tell me. He came when I rang the bell, and informed me that he knew nothing whatsoever about anything. I told him that I'd just seen Uncle Bob walking down the road, and with that he went off the deep end. He was very annoyed indeed to hear of the escape. It wasn't difficult to persuade him to show me where he'd imprisoned his captives, but I couldn't pick up any information there. The old boy wasn't very helpful, so I thought I'd better follow you back to the house. And as I didn't like leaving him alone in that place with The Owl flying about, I suggested that he might like to come with me."

Mr. Knight chuckled.

"He seems to have rather a dislike for you, Mr. Porter. I had to use a good deal of—er—persuasion, but I really couldn't leave him there. I carried him to the boat and pushed out into the creek. I was in full view when some of our friends came along and decided that I made quite a good target. It didn't seem a moment for standing on ceremony, so I started up the motor and streaked for home."

"I believe Tim Haslam is in league with The Owl," said Porter.

"Do you? Why?"

"They told Mr. Knight what had happened during his absence. He listened without comment."

"Scarface is gone, and The Owl has killed Wilson," he murmured when they had finished. "The plot thickens, doesn't it? We'll get Haslam up and have a talk with him, though personally I don't think—" He broke off suddenly.

"By Jimmy! Look!"

At first the others could not see the reason for his excitement. Then they noticed the dark shadow slowly advancing over the countryside.

"A storm!" cried Aileen.

"Yes," Mr. Knight pointed up at the moon which seemed to be racing toward a thick black cloud. "We shan't be able to see our friends across the water much longer."

Henry gazed from the storm-cloud to the men on the creekside. It was clear that they were agitated about something; and after a moment they separated, running along the bank.

"They're going!" he said.

"I'm afraid not, old chappie. As soon as the moon is hidden, they'll be in darkness. They'll swim across the creek singly, landing at different points of the island. And we shan't be able to stop them."

CHAPTER IX

"WHAT do you suggest?" asked Robert Porter.

It was strange how Mr. Knight seemed to have assumed control of the situation. Porter was looking at him now. The others were looking at him. Since the moon had gone they could see no more of him than a vague blur silhouetted against the window. But still they looked at him as though expecting him to produce a miraculous solution of their troubles.

"You've got a gun, haven't you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Good! Unfortunately, not knowing that I was in for a little picnic like this, I didn't bring ammunition with me. I've five shots left. Got any spare cartridges?"

"I think so. There should be plenty in my bedroom."

"Good again. Well, visibility outside is about a foot. Obviously it's no use trying to stop our friends landing. Probably the storm won't last long, but they'll be on the island. We can only hope to keep them out of the house."

"You really think they'll try to break in?"

"I'm sure they'll get in, unless we keep very wide awake."

The House of Sleep

Now suppose you stay up here, Mr. Porter. Better get the maids out to do their bit, also. Patrol the corridor, and keep an eye on all the windows. I'll do the same downstairs. Mr. Downes and Miss Porter can help to harried the doors and keep watch generally."

No one queried this plan. Leaving Porter upstairs, Mr. Knight returned to the hall, followed by Henry and Aileen. "Mr. Haslam will have to be content with the floor," he said. "We want that settle against the door."

"Aren't you going to unfasten him?" asked Aileen as they lifted the old man off the settle. "He's nothing to do with The Owl, you know."

"Your uncle seems to think he has."

"Oh, Uncle Bob's dippy about that. I'm sure he hasn't."

"I'm inclined to think you're right. We'll attend to him as soon as we've seen to our defenses."

They pulled the heavy oak settle against the door. Outside the rain was still swishing down, and the roar of thunder almost deafened them.

"They—they'll get very wet, won't they?" giggled Henry hysterically.

"To be sure they will." Mr. Knight glanced at him sharply. "Look here, old chappie! Suppose you take a flashlight and go around making certain that all the shutters are fast."

"All right," agreed Henry. "I'll do that."

He was on the verge of losing control of himself. His fingers were trembling as he accepted the electric torch. He had always been scared of thunder and lightning; and the sudden storm, coming in the midst of all this mystery and violence, had increased his nervous tension almost to the breaking point.

But as he went around the lounge, carefully inspecting the shutters, he began to feel better. He was no longer a helpless passenger in a train heading to destruction. At least he was doing something, taking a share in the fight against the common enemy. And little by little, as he carried out his task, a fierce anger against that enemy slowly replaced his fear.

Before leaving the room he picked up a heavy poker from the hearth.

"If they do get in," he muttered to himself, "they'll find more than they bargained for."

He continued his circuit of the house. The feel of the poker in his hand cheered him considerably. He had never hit anyone with a poker. It might be quite a pleasurable experience.

He did his job very thoroughly. In spite of the dead man lying down there, he included the cellars in his tour of inspection. As he returned up the stone stairs, he noticed a door which he had overlooked previously.

This door led into a small pantry, and when Henry opened it, he knew at once that things were not as they should be. The suddenly increased noise of the rain warned him that here was some communication with the night outside.

He stood breathless, palpitating. A faint scraping sound came from the darkness. He flashed his light.

His heart stopped, then raced on unmercifully. He could hardly believe his eyes. The small window of the pantry was open. Through it protruded the head and shoulders of a man.

In that moment Henry saw red. Without hesitation he sprang forward, raising the poker.

"Got you!" he cried, bringing down his weapon with all the force he could. "Got you, you devil!"

THE poker missed the man's head and fell on his shoulder. There was a crack as the bone fractured, and a moan of pain. The man vanished.

"Any more of you?" yelled Henry. "Come on!"

A revolver spat outside, and a bullet whined through the window. Hastily slamming the shutter to, he shot the bolt. He felt sick now, with the thought of that breaking bone. But he forced himself to examine the fastening of the shutter before returning to the hall.

"You've been having adventures," said Mr. Knight, after once glance at his pallid face. "What's happened?"

Henry told him; then sat down heavily on the settle.

"Good work, old chappie! Couldn't have done it better myself. What do you think of our preparations here?"

The hall was reeling about in a most fantastic manner. Henry saw Aileen slip into the lounge through a door in the ceiling, and he wondered dizzily how she managed it. She returned in a moment with a glass which she held upside down, to his lips. Something buried his throat.

After a while, things steadied down. The hall resumed its normal appearance, except for the furniture piled against

the door. Even Mr. Knight ceased rolling about the floor, and seriously applied himself to the task of unfastening Timothy Haslam's bonds.

Henry smiled shakily up at Aileen.

"We—we're giving 'em hell, aren't we?" he faltered.

"Sure! We've put two of 'em out already. You're great, Henry! Have another drink."

Mr. Knight finished his job at last, and helped Timothy Haslam to his feet.

"Perhaps you see now why I invited you to come along here?" he asked.

HASLAM drew his eyeglasses from his pocket and adjusted them precariously on his nose. He was a man of sixty-five, tall and spare, with sandy hair and a thin, intelligent face.

"I think so," he replied in his high-pitched voice. "Though I could understand anything happening in Robert Porter's house. What's it all about?"

"That's just what I want you to tell us."

"I know nothing about it."

"You know why you imprisoned Porter and Wilson."

"Oh, that!" A trace of a smile showed on Haslam's ascetic face. "That's different. I ask you—what would you do if old enemy came to your house late at night, breathing threats and flourishing a revolver?"

"You lied to me," said Aileen. "You told me Uncle Bob wasn't—"

"Of course, my dear. I thought a night in my cellar would do him no harm. I know your Uncle Bob as well as you do. He's rather—er—hot blooded."

"That's all very well," said Mr. Knight. "But—"

A loud knocking on the door interrupted Mr. Knight. He motioned the others to stand against the walls.

"Hello!" he called.

"Are you going to open this door?" demanded a soft smooth voice from outside.

"Why are you so anxious to come in?"

"Never mind about that. Will you open, or won't you?"

"We certainly won't! We're having quite a good time, doing very nicely so far, thank you."

"I'm giving you a last chance. The voice showed no trace of emotion, but its silky coldness was more horrible than any threat. "Open the door, and I'll promise you shan't be harmed."

Mr. Knight looked round at his companions. Aileen shook her head vigorously. So did Henry. He didn't want any closer acquaintance with the owner of that voice.

"I don't think we trust your promises," said Mr. Knight.

"If on the other hand you resist, we shall kill you all."

"But first you'll have to get into the house, won't you?"

"We shall set fire to it, and shoot you as you try to escape."

"That's just one thing you daren't do, old chappie. You'd be frightened of the glow in the sky bringing help to us."

There was silence for a moment.

"Thank you, my friend," said the smooth voice then. "I haven't thought of that. We shall not burn the house down. There are enough of us to break this door open."

"Carry on. You forget that we on this side can do a little shooting, too."

Again there was silence, a silence that seemed all the more ominous because the door had ceased. Far away thunder still rolled intermittently.

Those in the hall listened intently. Soon they could hear a scuffling of feet outside. Another pregnant hush followed, then a sharp word of command: "Now!"

Something struck the door with a tremendous thud. The stout panels shivered.

"Quick!" whispered Mr. Knight. "Out with the light. And make sure of the back. This may be just a ruse."

As Aileen turned out the lamp, Henry seized his poker and groped his way to the rear of the house. Using the electric torch now, he again examined all the windows and found them intact. So far as he could tell, nothing was stirring outside.

He heard repeated crashes on the front door as he hurried round, and once he came back from a revolver. When he returned to the hall, he could not distinguish its occupants in the darkness. But he saw a long narrow hole in the door, and realized that the moon was shining outside once more.

Again the tremendous thud on the door, and the gap widened. For a second a man's arm was silhouetted in the opening, and Mr. Knight's revolver spat flame.

"We have the advantage at the moment," he said quietly as the arm disappeared. "But I've only three shots left."

The House of Sleep

"I'll fetch Uncle Bob," suggested Aileen. "There are plenty of cartridges to fit his revolver."

"He'd better stop where he is, I think. The stairs are our second line of defence, you know."

Crash after crash on the door. The woodwork splintered, and suddenly fell away altogether. The attackers slipped to one side out of sight. Only the old oak settle now blocked their way.

Henry gripped his poker tightly. He had forgotten the faintness that followed his first use of it, and was quite prepared to try again. He had no intention of standing still while these thugs outside shot him.

There was quite a perceptible pause before anything else happened, slowly and deliberately, the unseen men outside started shooting into the darkness of the hall. Henry's heart stood still as a bullet whined past his ear and buried itself in the wall.

"Get upstairs everybody," whispered Mr. Knight. They'll rush us in a minute."

Henry could hear Aileen and Mr. Haslam make toward the stairs. He stood rigid, holding the poker ready. He wanted one more smack before he ran away.

Without warning of any kind the attack came. One moment the doorway was empty; and the next it was filled with a confusion of black shadows swarming over the settle.

Mr. Knight's revolver barked sharply. Henry's poker rose and fell in a frenzy of action. He couldn't see what he was hitting, but he knew he was hitting something.

The turmoil and the noise were bewildering. He felt a sharp pain in his arm and wondered if he'd been shot. The attackers were over the settle now. He was in the midst of them. He realized that, in the darkness, they couldn't distinguish him as an enemy. Pushed back by their rush, he continued to lay about him as vigorously as he could with the poker.

But this couldn't go on forever. After one particularly wild blow he heard a muttered oath close beside him. The poker was wrenched from his grip, and two vicious hands clutched his throat. Bright lights flickered before his eyes. Intense agony tore at his chest. In a moment he would surely be lost to the world.

Suddenly Robert Porter's hearty voice roared from above:

"Keep 'em out! Just a moment longer. There's help coming!"

Almost at the same moment a loud report sounded in the distance. Someone outside shouted:

"Come on, boys! Fade! It's the cops!"

The grip on Henry's throat relaxed. Breathless, he swayed dizzily on his feet. As in a dream he saw the vicious and horrible black shadows retreating through the door.

A wild exultation thrilled through him. The attackers were in flight—and he had done his bit! He stumbled to the door, climbed over the heavy old settle, and looked out.

The night was bright and peaceful once more. All trace of the storm had vanished, and the moon hung serene in a cloudless sky. In her soft light Henry could see a large motorboat rapidly approaching up the creek.

CHAPTER X

THE next few hours were the most hectic the little draper had ever experienced. The newcomer turned out to be one Jonas Hardaker, solicitor, on a holiday, with his servant, Benn. He immediately attached himself to the attacked party as an ally. Next, the Owl's gang tried to abduct Aileen; and in the ensuing rescue, Henry killed one of the kidnapers, the man with the scar.

Benn, the servant, then disappeared. He had been shot, while trying to get Aileen and the two maids to a spot of safety, and had fallen overboard from the boat in which they were fleeing, and in all likelihood, drowned. The two maids then vanished during the excitement, probably lost in the bogs. Mr. Knight had also been rudely knocked into the water, and left for the worse.

Henry and Aileen, returning to the house after wandering in the marshes—Henry, dazed, at having dealt out death at close quarters—found the house deserted and ransacked from top to bottom. And in the cellar was Timothy Haslam, who stared at the ceiling with sightless eyes. His throat had been cut as Wilson's had. And on his chest, too, was a small white card bearing a drawing of an owl.

"WELL," Henry asked when they reached the hall, "what do we do now?"

She looked at him for a while in silence. The flickering candlelight showed the growing deterioration on her face.

"I'm going to look for Uncle Bob," she said eventually.

"Where?"

"I don't know. Oh, Henry! Can't you see? He must be in desperate danger. The Owl must have caught them all—perhaps Mr. Knight as well."

"I don't think that follows," protested Henry, trying to cheer her. "Haslam may have—"

"Haslam is dead. For all we know, Uncle Bob is dead, too. I must find out at once. If you don't want to come, you can stay here and—"

"Don't be stupid," said Henry rudely. "Where do we go?"

"Well, there's no one here. They must be somewhere. I think we ought to search the garden, the bank of the creek, the road—anywhere—everywhere."

"All right. Come on."

Leaving the dark silent house, they went out again into the moonlight. It did not take long to ascertain that they were alone on the island. They crossed the causeway and searched the farther bank of the creek without result. They worked their way slowly along the road, carefully examining the bushes on either side, until they reached Mr. Haslam's house, shuttered and deserted as before. Their search was unavailing. They saw no sign of anyone. Apart from themselves the countryside was empty.

"The Owl must have carried them off somewhere," said Aileen hopelessly.

"They may be miles away by now."

"Yes. I suppose we'd better get along to the village and inform the police."

"I suppose so," Aileen hesitated. "You don't think there may be anyone in here?"

Henry gazed at the padlocked gates, at the dark mass of the house looming ghost-like and silent in the moonlight.

"Doesn't seem very likely," he said. "But perhaps you'd feel more comfortable if we had a look round."

"I believe I should."

"Very well. Be careful of that barbed wire."

They climbed over the wall as before and jumped down into the garden. It was full of shadows, but though they stood motionless for quite a while they could see no movement. Not even a rustle of leaves disturbed the stillness of the night.

"Doesn't look as though there's anyone here," whispered Henry, instinctively lowering his voice. "But we'll make sure."

They crept through the undergrowth toward the house. They were half-way across the garden when a sudden movement in the shrubbery startled them. Before they had time to do anything, a dark form materialized out of the shadows.

"Stick 'em up!" barked a hoarse voice. "Any foolin', an' you're in for it!"

His heart palpitating from the shock of surprise, Henry slowly raised his hands. Aileen did the same. The dark figure stepped forward into a patch of moonlight. They could see the threatening revolver in his hand, the black mask that hid his face.

"Babes in the woods," he sneered unpleasantly. "Don't move unless you want the dicky birds to bury you. He imitated the call of an owl. "Tu-whit, tu-whoo-o-o. Jerry! Hi, Jerry!"

In a few moments another dark figure slid silently into view. He, also, was masked and he also carried a revolver.

"Visitors, Jerry," said the first man. "You'd better take 'em to the Boss."

"Okay," said Jerry briefly.

They were in the hands of The Owl!

There was not much time to think. As soon as they reached the house, Jerry gave three sharp raps on the door, keeping a wary eye on his prisoners. The door was opened by another masked man. Obviously, now that they had come into close contact with their victims, The Owl and his satellites were taking precautions.

"Where's the Boss?" asked Jerry.

"Through here," replied the doorkeeper, pointing. "Who's you got?"

"Dunno. But I guess he'll be pleased to see 'em."

Jerry herded his prisoners through the dimly lit hall. Here was the same confusion as in Robert Porter's house,

The House of Sleep

the same signs of hurried but thorough search. And in the dining-room indicated by the doorkeeper, the large table was covered by a mass of papers which the sole occupant was scrutinizing carefully.

He looked up as they entered, his eyes glittering evilly through the mask.

"Well, my friend," he asked, his voice soft and smooth as velvet, "more visitors?"

"Yesir. Found 'em wanderin' in the garden."

"Good!" The man rose from the table and approached Aileen and Henry, looking at them closely. "Dear me! Quite a coincidence! Surely you are the young lady who left in Mr. Hardaker's motor boat?"

Aileen faced him fearlessly. Her cheeks had paled a little, but her mouth was firm.

"I am," she replied briefly.

"Dear me!" There was something horribly menacing in the quietness of the silky voice. "The gods seem to be favoring me. I intended using you as—shall we say a hostage for the good behavior of your friends? You escaped, evidently. And now you have come walking back to me! Very considerate of you! Where are all your companions?"

"Find out!" said Aileen defiantly.

"That should not be too difficult, my dear young lady."

The man turned to Henry. "And you, my friend—who are you?"

"Who are you?" countered Henry.

"If you must have a name, you can call me Mr. Smith."

"Cough Drops?" sneered Aileen.

"Hardly that. But I fear we are wasting valuable time. Come, tell me—what has become of the young man who left with you in the dinghy?"

"Find out!" said Henry, following Aileen's example, but wondering if this was quite the best attitude to adopt in the circumstances.

Their questioner showed no sign of irritation or impatience. His voice retained its repellent softness.

"You are making things rather difficult—for yourselves as well as for me. At least you won't mind telling me how you managed to rescue this young lady. One of my men was hidden on the boat; he can usually be trusted to carry out his work."

"He didn't this time. I killed him."

"Dear me! I shall miss him. I understood that you had—gone for the police?"

"So I did," lied Henry. "They'll be here any minute now."

It was impossible to tell whether the man who called himself Smith believed this statement.

"I'm afraid you are not entirely truthful," he said.

"Well, well, we have ways and means of getting at the truth." In spite of his calm, a certain briskness appeared in his movements, as though there were little time to spare. "We'll go into the kitchen. Perhaps we shall hear more there. Lead the way, Jerry."

Puzzled, more than a little uneasy, Henry and Aileen were ushered out of the room. In the hall, Smith paused for a word with the doorkeeper.

"Don't be disturbed whatever you hear from the kitchen," he said. "It may be that we shall be trying some little experiments."

There was an ominous ring to these words that made both the prisoners hesitate. Jerry jabbed his revolver into the back of each in turn.

"Keep these hands up," he snapped. "And keep movin'."

SMITH preceded them round the turn in the short passage, and unlocked the kitchen door.

"Friends of yours here," he purred smoothly. "Quite a family reunion."

He pushed the door open. Through it, by the dim light of a single oil lamp, they could see the helpless figures of Robert Porter and Jonas Hardaker securely fastened to a couple of chairs.

Ignoring her captors Aileen ran forward through the door.

"Uncle Bob!" she cried. "Are you all right?"

Porter's round face was purple with anger.

"Of course, I'm all right!" he roared. "And if only I

could lay my hands on some of these devils—"

"Be quiet, Porter," interrupted Hardaker. "No use making things worse than they are. Sorry to see you two

back. We hoped you'd got away."

"Mr. Downes rescued me from the man with the scar

and—"

"If you don't mind," the smooth cold voice broke in, "I

think we might pass to more important matters. Fasten these two up securely, Jerry."

Jerry pushed Henry and Aileen into chairs. He knew how to handle a rope. When he had finished, neither of them could move an inch.

Smith stood watching, a hint of a smile curving the thin cruel lips below his mask.

"And now," he said, his tone suggesting the evil malice of a serpent, "we'll try to get at the truth."

CHAPTER XI

NOW that we are all here," he said—and there was no trace of hurry in the silky voice—"we might as well settle our business—amicably, if possible.

None of you has seen his way to answer my harmless questions. I'm going to tell you a little story in the hope that it may persuade you to be more friendly. If not—well, I'm afraid I shall have to resort to different methods."

There was a tense silence in the kitchen. No sound from outside penetrated through the shuttered windows. The prisoners, realizing that the events of the night had reached a crisis, were listening anxiously. Only the man Jerry, carelessly leaning against the door, seemed unconcerned. His eyes, occasionally glimpsed through the slits in his mask, were rarely still.

"My story goes back a year," continued Smith, "to the time when you, Porter, were in partnership with Haslam."

"The old fool!" snapped Porter.

"Uncle Bob!" said Aileen softly. "He's dead!"

"Old Timothy?"

"Yes. Murdered. Just like Wilson."

"My soul and body! If only I could—"

"Please! Please! You really must allow me to proceed."

Smith's fingers were tapping a restless tattoo on the table, but his level tone did not alter. "This supposed burglary was attributed to a criminal known as The Owl. I think you will admit by now that I should know something of The Owl's activities; and I assure you, most emphatically, that he did not steal those bonds."

He paused, but no one spoke. Robert Porter stared at him wide-eyed, as though struck dumb with surprise.

"The burglary was a fake," he went on. "It was what the police call an inside job. The bonds were stolen by someone who knew that they were in the safe."

"I am naturally jealous of The Owl's reputation, and when I heard of this burglary which I knew he had not committed, I decided to do a little investigating on my own. It has taken a long time to make sure of my facts. I have had to work intermittently, of course, and secretly, through underground channels. Nevertheless, I have established one or two important points."

"In the first place, I discovered that three people—and three people only—knew of the existence of the bonds. Those three were Porter, Haslam, and their confidential clerk, Wilson. One of them was responsible for the theft."

"In my efforts to narrow the case down, I discovered an interesting fact. No one of these three suspects seemed to have benefitted financially from the theft. My cautious inquiries through banks and other channels told me that Porter had retired on a comfortable income, quite adequately accounted for. Haslam's case was precisely similar. While Wilson still earned his living as a sort of secretary."

"Which knocks your theory on the head completely," commented Hardaker caustically.

"Not at all." Smith leaned forward a little, and his voice grew softer than ever. "It merely proves that the thief was awaiting a suitable opportunity for disposing of the bonds—which were still in his possession."

Again silence fell on the kitchen. Henry looked at Aileen. It was clear from her expression that she had no suspicion of what Smith was alleging. Robert Porter, too, seemed quite dumbfounded, but Henry realized that his apparent surprise might be fictitious. Only Jonas Hardaker appeared unmoved.

"The police investigated this burglary a year ago, I suppose," he pointed out. "It hardly seems likely that—"

"The police were convinced that The Owl was responsible," said Smith. His lips curved into a faint smile. "You see, they lacked the inside information which I possess, and they looked no further for the thief. There is no doubt about the facts, my friends. Porter, Haslam or Wilson—one of these three had the stolen bonds."

"And this idea of yours, whether right or wrong, explains your—er—activities tonight?"

The House of Sleep

"Precisely. I felt that as The Owl had been blamed for stealing those bonds he ought to have them. Seeing that two of my suspects were living in the same house, that house seemed the logical place to start. I had no wish that anyone should suffer from my search so, as you know, I used a harmless drug to keep the occupants quiet. Unfortunately, this plan was spoiled by the unexpected arrival of two strangers."

"Mr. Knight?" exclaimed Henry.
"And yourself," Smith slid from the table to his feet, and paced slowly about the kitchen. "I had to make a rather hurried exit, and consider what steps to take next. To be on the safe side I gathered some of my friends together, and awaited developments."

"I NOW had what appeared to be a stroke of good luck. Porter and Wilson left the house. Following them, I witnessed their imprisonment in the cellar here. I knew that this meant nothing—I have been studying my suspects for some time, of course, and was quite aware of the preposterous feud between Haslam and Porter—but it suggested another line of action. I rescued Wilson and talked to him alone."

"Another setback. He denied all knowledge of the bonds. Judging by what information I had, I considered him the most likely of the three to be the man I wanted. I told him he must either confess or die. He persisted in his denial. I always keep my word."

Not a hint of compunction or regret in the cold, smooth voice. It was clear to everyone in the kitchen that the men they were watching would allow nothing to deter him from his purpose.

"It is hardly necessary to go into every little detail," he went on immediately. "My attack on the house was frustrated by you, Hardaker. When you very foolishly decided to separate I saw another opportunity. As you know, I captured the three of you on the creek; and one of my men, though you tell me he is dead, managed to prevent anyone reaching the police."

"I now made a thorough search of the abandoned house, and came to the conclusion that the bonds were not hidden there. I talked to Haslam as I had talked to Wilson—with the same result. I have searched this house unsuccessfully. And now, by a process of logical elimination, I have narrowed my suspects down to one. Porter! Where are those bonds?"

Robert Porter strained breathlessly at the ropes that fastened him to the chair.

"I know nothing about them!" he snapped.
"You are the last of the suspects."

"If I knew I'd see you in hell before I told you!"

"So," Mr. Smith ceased his pacing and stood facing Aileen. "I anticipated this difficulty, and tried to arrange for it by imprisoning the young lady—Miss Porter, isn't it? Your niece, I believe. Luckily, she is still with us. I don't want to kill you, Porter—you may have some golden eggs for me—but I do intend that you shall talk. You understand me?"

"You wouldn't touch her! You daren't touch her, you—"

"Please please! I always keep my word. It is a very old, perhaps hackneyed method, but usually efficacious. Light the fire, Jerry."

Leaving the door, Jerry lounged across the kitchen. He found paper and sticks, and soon the fire was blazing brightly. Aileen's face was pale as she followed his every movement. Henry, watching her, grew sick with apprehension.

Smith picked up the poker and thrust it into the heart of the flames.

"It will take a little while to grow hot," he said. "Just long enough for you to make up your mind to behave sensibly."

Distended veins stood out on Robert Porter's face as he vainly tried to free himself.

"You devil!" he cried hoarsely. "If only I could—"
"Be quiet, Porter!" said Hardaker. "Let me handle this. You're only making things worse. Look here, Smith! Let's talk this over. It's a very horrible thing you're contemplating, and I'm sure you don't want to do it if you can help it."

"I want the bonds."
"Yes, yes! But you're acting entirely on supposition. You're not sure that Porter has them. For all you know I may have them."

"Then you can speak and prevent this going any further," Smith smiled again. "You can't throw dust in my eyes, Hardaker. You know nothing about this business."

You dropped into it quite accidentally, just like Downes here, and I'm not interested in you except in so far as you stand in my way. Stoke up, Jerry."

Hardaker tried no more. But Henry's brown eyes were hard and glittering as they gazed at the masked face.
"You can't kill us all," he said slowly. "If you harm Miss Porter in any way we'll find you out later, and we'll hang you—some time!"

"I'll look after myself—when I've got those bonds."
"Again there was silence, tense and dreadful, sickening. Aileen's white throat worked convulsively as she tried to swallow. Henry dared not look at her. Robert Porter's livid face was streaming with perspiration, but he did not speak. Hardaker was sombre, tight-lipped. Even the cold-blooded Smith seemed agitated. Only the man Jerry, back at the door again, was completely unconcerned."

Slow minutes dragged past remorselessly. Smith drew out the poker. It glowed redly, and the kitchen was filled with the suggestive smell of hot metal.

"Now, Porter," he said, advancing to Aileen. "Where are they?"

"I don't know," muttered Porter. His lips were quivering.

"I shan't ask you again. First a slight burn on the face as an earnest. It will be painful, of course, and leave a scar. If this does not move you, I shall take the eyes—one by one. And may I remind you that—I keep my word."

Aileen tried to shrink back as the hot metal approached her face. Her eyes closed, and her cheeks grew paler still. But she did not speak or cry out.

Henry struggled desperately with his bonds. Robert Porter's horrified eyes stood out from his face as they followed the slow advance of the red hot iron.

"Oh, God! . . ." he groaned.

"Tell him, man!" cried Hardaker suddenly. "He's not bluffing. He'll do it! You can't see the girl blinded. Tell him where the damned things are."

"I don't know!" Porter's voice rose into a scream. "I don't know anything about them. As God's my judge! I didn't take them. I've never seen them. And—"

"Another half-inch," said Smith softly, "and the skin will blister."

"I'd tell you if I could! That's true! I haven't the faintest idea where they are, if only I knew—"

"Say, Boss!" Jerry's high-pitched voice broke in. "There's someone outside this door."

Smith turned, the glowing iron almost in contact with the girl's soft cheek.

"See who it is," he ordered.

Jerry opened the door. A revolver barked sharply outside. He jumped back into the room, pulling the door to.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "That was a near one!"

"Who was it?"

"Dunno, Boss! Hadn't time to see a thing."

"Can't be the police," Smith strode to the fire and thrust the poker back into it. There was a trace of uneasiness in his voice. "Come on! We'd better look into it."

Drawing an automatic from his pocket, he turned to the door. As he touched the handle, an amazing thing happened. His back was toward Jerry; and Jerry raised a revolver and hit him gently behind the right ear. He dropped without a sound.

Jerry turned and surveyed the astounded prisoners.

"Miss Porter's fainted," he said, and the falsetto note had gone from his voice. He strode toward Henry. "Better try your special remedy again, old chap."

He stripped the mask from his face, disclosing the cheerful smiling features of Mr. Clarence Knight.

CHAPTER XII

"WELL, I'm hanged!" stammered Henry. "How did you get here?"

"Getting here was easy enough," Mr. Knight attacked Henry's bonds. "It's how to get out again that troubles me. When I swam ashore, I was just in time to follow everyone here. I sneaked into the garden, but couldn't get any further because Jerry and his boy friend—name of Pete, by the way—were keeping a pretty keen lookout. After watching them a while, I managed to catch Jerry by himself. He was about my size, and wore clothes similar to these; I saw an opportunity of getting into the house sooner or later, so I persuaded him to lend me his mask and revolver. He's fast asleep under a bush—at least, I hope so. There you are, old chap. Perhaps you'll attend to Miss Porter while I look after the others."

Jonas Hardaker gazed at him with reluctant admiration. "Dangerous game you played, young man," he grunted as

The House of Sleep

his hands were freed. "Who shot at you when you opened the door?"

"No one," grinned Mr. Knight. "I fired into the wall. You see, something fairly desperate was required to draw Smith from Miss Porter's room."

"You left it rather late."

"Naturally. I didn't want to disclose myself unless absolutely necessary."

"Well, you saved the girl from a horrible fate. He meant business. Hardaker shook off the remaining rope and turned to Porter. 'You'd have let her die,' he muttered in disgust."

"I couldn't help it," moaned Porter. "For the moment he was broken, flabby and inert with the reaction after the nervous strain. 'I couldn't tell him when I didn't know.'"

"You're lying."

"I'm not! It's God's truth! No one was more surprised at what he told us than I was."

"Then he's miscalculated somewhere. I apologize," Hardaker crossed to the motionless body of Smith and picked up his revolver. "And now—what's the situation precisely?"

"Not altogether bright and beautiful," said Mr. Knight. "We're all right for the moment, I suppose, but it's only a question of time before we're discovered."

"Can't we fight our way out?"

"We've got two guns between us. And a girl to protect."

"H'm! Doesn't sound too promising. You've put two of them *hors de combat*. How many more are left?"

"I don't know exactly. There must be three or four about in the house. At least one in the garden. And the two still guarding the road."

"You don't think we can sneak out—say, by a window?"

"Five people are too many to sneak out of a guarded house."

"I suppose you're right. What do you suggest?"

"Let's talk about it."

Henry released Aileen. In spite of their perilous situation, he was filled with an intense and joyous relief. In those few nightmare moments when he had been compelled to sit, helpless, watching the preparations for torturing her, he had realized that the suspense was very much worse to bear than if any other girl had been in her place. He had come to see that Aileen's safety and happiness meant a great deal to him. And he felt that he could never repay Mr. Clarence Knight for what he had done.

He fussed over the unconscious girl as he listened to the conversation. He rubbed her cold hands, and brought water from the tap to moisten her pale lips. He drew her head on to his shoulder and patted it gently. He was a very long way from Downes's Drapery Emporium at Brixton.

The discussion on plans was carried on almost entirely by Hardaker and Mr. Knight. Porter was still suffering from shock and Henry was otherwise occupied. He gathered, however, that neither of the two was very optimistic about the future.

"We're in a bit of a hole," confessed Mr. Knight eventually. "And I'm afraid it will be a question of choosing the least of several evils. Obviously, there's nothing much to be said for waiting here until someone discovers what has happened. There are two methods of leaving—openly and secretly. Frankly I wouldn't care to attempt the former in the circumstances. And I don't see how we can manage the latter." He paused. "Unless—"

"Unless what?" Hardaker prompted.

"Wait here for me, all of you, please. And don't make a sound."

MR. KNIGHT readjusted his mask and silently opened the door. He stole cautiously through it, closing it behind him.

Anxious moments dragged past. Aileen opened her eyes. The haze cleared away from them almost immediately, and she smiled feebly at Henry, a weak trusting little smile that clutched at his heart. He held her more tightly in his arms. She didn't seem to mind, but lay there quite content while he whispered to her about the strange metamorphosis of Jerry.

Mr. Knight returned as silently as he had departed.

"No suspicions yet," he announced. "I think we'll be able to manage it. Hello, little lady! Glad to see you awake again. Strange craze for sleeping there is in these parts."

His cheerfulness was stimulating. Aileen managed to get to her feet.

"We need a few super-salesmen to stir us up," she admitted.

"Good for you! Don't hurry. We've a few little things

to do here before we go. First we must put the fire out. Perhaps you'll attend to that, Hardaker, while I look round for paraffin."

"What do you want paraffin for?"

"Strange paradox—I want to make a fire."

"Set fire to the house?"

"Why not, old chappie? It isn't ours."

"But I don't see—"

"It's very simple, really," Mr. Knight was searching cupboards. "When they discover that the house is on fire, they'll come rushing here. There'll be a window open, and they'll think they've escaped through it. They'll rush out to look for us, and they won't find us. Then, because they don't let the house get properly alight—for fear it brings investigation—they'll rush back here to put the fire out. And while they're doing that we'll fade away."

AND where shall we be while they're searching for us?"

"Down in that cellar where Porter and Wilson were imprisoned. It's just under this kitchen. I'll bet a fat cigar they'll never think of looking there for us—until it's too late."

"By Jove!" cried Henry. "That's a brainwave!"

"Of course it is, old chappie! Better than some that come from Brixton, eh?"

"It may work," admitted Hardaker slowly. "It's worth trying, anyhow."

He pointed to the unconscious figure of Smith lying on the floor. "What about him?"

"Ah, here we are," Mr. Knight brought a large tin of paraffin from a corner cupboard. "Plenty of it, too. About Smith—we'll just leave him here."

"To burn?"

"Well, we can't take him along, can we? I'm very much afraid I can't burn—his pale face, get here too soon."

"We'll pull him nearer the door if you'll feel more comfortable about it. Personally, I'd like to put a bullet into him. But that isn't considered gentlemanly, unfortunately. Anyhow, we'll just take a look at him. I've an idea we may see him again, and we'd all be disappointed if we didn't recognize him."

Laying down his tin, Mr. Knight strode across to the unconscious man and removed the mask. He stood a few moments gazing down at the pallid face, evil even in its helplessness, then shrugged his shoulders.

"No prizes for beauty," he muttered. "But I think we'll all know him if we're unlucky enough to see him again."

He turned his attention to the fire and helped to extinguish it with jugs of water.

"Who do you want to see?" asked Hardaker.

"So that we can open the shutters without the glow showing through. For the same reason we must turn the lamp out. But that can wait. Help me to shift the furniture into the middle of the room."

Everyone set to work with a will. Dressers, chairs and tables were piled together and liberally drenched with paraffin. Old newspapers and sticks were stuffed beneath the pile, and the tin of oil emptied over the lot.

"Quite a nice bonfire we'll have," said Mr. Knight. "Pity our friend Smith's name isn't Fawkes. Are we all ready now? Over by the door, please. I'm going to turn the light out."

Huddled by the door, they watched him extinguish the lamp. The darkness they heard him cross the kitchen and carefully unfasten the shutters. They caught a momentary glimpse of his vague silhouette as he silently opened the window. Then he was among them once more.

"Quietly now, please," he whispered. "Follow me. If we're discovered, we're done."

He opened the door and stood listening. A dim glimmer of reflected light came from the lamp in the hall. There was a murmur of distant voices, but no sound near at hand.

Breathless, on tiptoe, they all moved along the stone-floored corridor behind him. They had to pass the end of the hall, but as they flitted past like silent gray ghosts, they could see that it was empty.

"Where's the man on duty at the door?" breathed Henry as they felt their way down the stone stairs at the end of the corridor.

"Having supper," chuckled Mr. Knight. "I told him he could break off for it."

Groping through the darkness he led the way to the cellar in which Porter and Wilson had been imprisoned. The window was still open just as Henry and Aileen had left it, and the sufficient light filtered through to show up white faces in the gloom.

Hardly had they entered the cellar when a weird scream came from the garden, the call of an owl, repeated twice.

The House of Sleep

"By jiminy!" muttered Mr. Knight. "That's an alarm! I'll bet they've found the real Jerry. I'd forgotten all about him. There's no time to waste. If I don't get back, you know what to do."

He disappeared silently. The others stood tense and breathless, listening.

They heard confused sounds overhead. A door slammed somewhere, and someone yelled an indistinguishable question. There was a scurry of feet. Then silence again.

It seemed an age before Mr. Knight returned. "Managed it," he said briefly. "Quiet, please! We must listen to what's going on."

They could hear vague sounds of movement in the garden. Another eternity passed. Then, dim at first but rapidly growing stronger, a red glow began to mingle with the moonlight outside.

"Hell!" suddenly shouted a voice, so near that they were all startled. "The place is on fire! What's the Boss doing? Come on, boys! There's something wrong."

Hurried footsteps retreated, the door slammed again, and there was a confusion of movement overhead. A note of consternation was evident in the unintelligible cries they could hear.

Very soon, heavy feet ran past the window. "Hey, Pete!" It was the same voice as before. "They've knocked the Boss out, set fire to the house, and escaped through the kitchen window."

"What the hell!" exclaimed a second voice. "They couldn't do that. No one's passed through this garden. I'd have seen 'em."

"No use talking that way. They've got through somehow. The fact that you've found Jerry out there proves that. They've got away. And we've got to put this darned fire out pronto. Come on and give a hand. You're doing no good out there now."

"What a bit of luck!" muttered Mr. Knight as the footsteps retreated once more. "They haven't realized yet that someone was impersonating Jerry. They think he's only just been knocked out—during your escape." He paused, listening. There was a tumult of sound overhead, and the red glow outside was brightening. "They're pretty well occupied, I think. Come on! It's now or never."

One by one they squeezed through the small window. Outside they had to keep on hands and knees to avoid showing themselves in the glare from the kitchen window. Keeping close to the wall, Mr. Knight led them round the house to the side away from the fire.

"Don't think there's anyone about," he said. "Anyhow, we've got to risk it. Make straight for the wall." They passed quickly through the underground. No one barred their way. In a very short time they had climbed the wall and stood in the road, free again.

"And now—what?" asked Hardaker. "Make for the village?"

Mr. Knight was silent for a moment, listening to the vague noises audible from the house.

"Those two guards will still be there," he said. "We can't risk a fight with them. It would bring the others after us."

"What do you suggest then?"
"Get another ignition key for your motorboat?"
"No. But I daresay we could manage to get over that difficulty."

"Take too long if we've to start monkeying with it. We're not sure that Scarface is dead, you know. No, the safest place for us is Porter's house. We can barricade that broken door. And there's plenty of ammunition."

"Good Lord! You don't think they'll try anything more?"
"There's only one thing I know about The Owl," said Mr. Knight gravely. "If he once gets his teeth into anything he never lets go."

CHAPTER XIII

THE road was still empty and deserted, and they saw no sign of life on their way. The house, when they reached it, slept peacefully under the moon. It seemed almost incredible now that the events of the last few nightmare hours had actually occurred.

Yet the broken door remained to prove their reality, the disorder throughout the house, and the two bodies in the cellar. No one could feel sure that the trouble was really over. It took some considerable time to restore order and barricade the door. During that time, though an anxious watch was kept from the little room above the hall, no movement of any sort or description on the mainland could be made out.

"I expect anything, old chappie—when The Owl's flying around."

Hardaker grunted. "You seem to have a great respect for this criminal, young man."

"I have."

"I can't understand why you know so much about him. I'm a solicitor—with a fairly large practice in the criminal courts—and I've never even heard of him. While you—What did you say you were?"

"A salesman."

"Well, how is it that you—"

"You'd be surprised what a lot of things one hears whilst selling vacuum cleaners," grinned Mr. Knight. "Look how innocently I dropped into this curious business here. And that reminds me—we're not making much progress."

"Progress in what?"

"Finding those stolen bonds."

"THERE are no stolen bonds here," said Robert Porter heavily, speaking for the first time. He had been standing silent in the darkness of the little room, almost broken by the strain of the ordeal through which he had passed. Obviously he was recovering now. "I don't believe a word that fellow said."

"I don't know that I agree with that," Hardaker's harsh voice was judicial in tone. "I suppose there's no doubt that the bonds did disappear a year ago?"

"No, there's no doubt about that."

"Well, surely The Owl ought to know whether he got them. I'm assuming that this man Smith is The Owl—or at any rate one of his lieutenants. I can't imagine any reason why he should say he hadn't got them if he had. And he'd not go to all this trouble unless he were sure of his facts."

"But I tell you the thing's impossible!" Porter's temper, always short, had been frayed by the night's happenings. "My soul and body! You don't suppose I'd have let that devil torture Aileen if I'd known—"

"You were not the only suspect, Mr. Porter," interrupted Hardaker. "Either Wilson or Haslam might have—"

"Haslam! Poor old Timothy!" Robert Porter choked. "We never saw eye to eye on anything. But I'd stake my life on his honesty."

"I was inclined to suspect him at first," confessed Mr. Knight. "But I expect you're right. What about Wilson?"

"If Wilson had stolen the bonds, would he remain here as my servant for a year?"

"He might—if he were waiting for an opportunity to dispose of them. That was Smith's idea, and I'm inclined to agree with him. I don't fancy that gentleman makes many mistakes."

"You think they may be hidden somewhere around?" asked Hardaker thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"The house has been searched pretty thoroughly."

"I know. But not thoroughly enough. After all, it's not easy to make a proper job of a search in a hurry in the dark."

"And you propose that we should—"

"I think we ought to investigate Wilson and his affairs a little more carefully than we have done. It might be a good idea to start with his body." Mr. Knight turned to Henry.

"Coming along?"

"Yes, I'll come with you," said Henry reluctantly.

He followed Mr. Knight out of the little room.

Down in the cellar he held a candle while Mr. Knight rapidly examined the bodies of the two men who lay there stiff and cold. All their pockets had been emptied. Not a clue of any sort or description could be found upon them.

"Not much left here," muttered Mr. Knight, rising from his knees. "Our only consolation is that the murderer didn't get any information from them, either, or he'd have had the bonds by now." He noticed something, and held up one of Wilson's hands. "Bring the candle a bit nearer, will you?" In the flickering light it could be seen that several of the dead man's fingers were stained. "What do you think about that, Mr. Downes?"

"Cigarettes?" suggested Henry, overcoming his repugnance as he approached more closely.

"I think not. Nicotine stains are usually confined to the two first fingers and the thumb. Each finger is affected here. Just the tip—especially the nails. And both hands! That's pyrogallic, or I'm a Dutchman."

"Pyrogallic?"

"Yes. You know—the stuff photographers use for developing plates."

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER XIV

There was a rising excitement in Mr. Knight's voice that puzzled Henry.

"What about it?" he asked.

"I don't know yet. It may not lead to anything. But there's just this one point: Judging by these stains, Wilson evidently did a good deal of photography. Moreover, he went about it in the old-fashioned way, developing his plates or films himself, instead of sending them to the nearest chemist. That seems to indicate a darkroom. Now both you and I have been through this house fairly carefully. Have you seen even the slightest sign of a darkroom?"

"No."

"Neither have I. And I think we should have noticed one. We'd better ask the little lady about it."

They went up the stone stairs. They could hear Aileen talking to her uncle in the kitchen. Mr. Knight wrinkled up his nose.

"Coffee!" he said, sniffing. "Good! Let's go."

As all the kitchen windows were closely shuttered it had been considered safe to leave the lamp burning. Robert Porter stood by the oilstove, waiting for the milk to boil. Aileen was cutting sandwiches.

"You're just in time," she smiled, looking up. "Discovered anything?"

"I've discovered an aching void," grinned Mr. Knight. "And as Mr. Downes has been with me, I expect he's discovered it, too."

"Rather!" agreed Henry, wondering how anyone could cut sandwiches so neatly.

"Well, neither of you can have anything until Mr. Hardaker has been served. He's keeping watch upstairs."

"Good man! We mustn't neglect the only chap who's working. I'll take his rations up."

Mr. Knight disappeared with a cup of coffee and a plate of very appetizing sandwiches, and returned a few moments later.

"Everything okay," he announced. "Nothing stirring outside. Hardaker's quite convinced nothing will stir."

"And you?"

"Don't know, little lady. Excellent coffee! Tell me—Wilson dabbled in photography, didn't he?"

"It was his hobby."

"And where did he work?"

"In an old hut on the marshes. He converted it to his liking, and buried himself in it for hours at a time. I say!" Aileen's blue eyes opened wide. "Tell me—are you thinking that—"

"I'm only thinking of the possibility that The Owl knew nothing of this hut. He emptied Wilson's pockets and searched the house. He found nothing. We might have better luck in this hut. Where is it?"

"I'll take you to it," suggested Porter.

Mr. Knight shook his head thoughtfully.

"Better if you stayed here, I think. We don't want so many of us wandering about outside. Suppose I take Mr. Downes. It won't be difficult to find?"

"Oh, you'll find it easy enough. It's on the other bank of the creek. There are stepping-stones across from the bathhouse, uncovered at low water. Time'll just about right now. When you get over the stones you'll see a path. Keep to it, and it leads you straight to the hut."

"Stones only uncovered at low water, eh? That's why I've not seen them before. And the odds are that none of The Owl's men have seen 'em, either," Mr. Knight swallowed his coffee and beckoned to Henry. "Come on, old chap! That hut may be interesting. We'd better get a move on if we want to be there first."

THEY had one revolver between them—Hardaker had the other—and one torch. After seeing that both were in order, Mr. Knight unbolted the door.

"Might as well go out this way," he murmured. "We should be able to reach the bathhouse without being seen."

"You think The Owl and his men are still somewhere near?"

"I'm quite sure of it. If I were equally sure of what they are doing, I'd be a lot happier. Now, remember, careful! The word."

Slowly and silently Mr. Knight unlatched the door and pulled it open an inch or two. He peered out cautiously through the narrow slit. A moment later he started back, pushed the door shut and rebolted it.

"A change of plan required," he announced calmly. "There's someone wandering about outside."

SUCH rapid confirmation of his opinion was startling. The other stared at him in silent agitation.

"Who is it?" breathed Porter at last.

"I don't know. I saw no more than a shadow moving amongst the shrubbery."

Silence again.

"What's to be done now?" asked Aileen after a while, moving a step toward Henry.

"Wait," said Mr. Knight. "Until something happens to give us a cue." He strode soundlessly toward the hall. "Better see that Hardaker is all right."

He returned in a few moments to report that nothing had been seen at the front of the house.

"We shall have to keep a lookout at the back as well," he went on. "I hadn't realized it was so easy to cross the creek at low water. What about it, Porter? Do you feel equal to—"

He broke off as footsteps sounded clearly on the stone flags outside. Everyone in the kitchen stood rigid, listening. The footsteps seemed to be faltering a little. But they were unmistakably approaching the door.

Clip, clomp, heavy, unhurried, growing louder like sounds in a nightmare. And then the crescendo suddenly ceased. There was nothing now but a faint shuffling beyond the door, and it was evident to everyone that the mysterious visitor had halted immediately outside.

Mr. Knight crept forward and laid his ear against the wood. Henry's eyes narrowed as he saw the handle of the door move gently, stealthily. Then there came a knock on the door, a knock altogether different from what anyone had expected, a knock timid, almost apologetic.

"Hello!" called Mr. Knight. "Who's there?"

"It's Benn, sir," came a shaky voice. "Mr. Hardaker's servant. Thank heaven I've found you here. Can I come in, sir?"

"No one with you, Benn?"

"No, sir."

"All right. Come in."

Mr. Knight drew the bolt. He also drew his revolver, holding it ready in case the servant's entry might be followed by a rush of The Owl's creatures who had forced their way in by a trick. But this precaution was unnecessary. Benn slipped quickly through the half-open door, and a glance outside showed that nothing was moving in the moonlight.

"You've been having adventures, old chap?"

The manservant was wet through, and plastered with mud from head to foot. He looked exhausted. He wiped away some sodden grass that was clinging to his grimy face, and stared round the kitchen.

"I'll say I have sir! I thought I'd never get out of those blinking marshes. I'm nearly done in."

"Sit down. Have some coffee. Feel equal to telling us what happened?"

"That won't take long, sir," Benn eagerly swallowed a cupful of coffee. "I really don't know much about it. I was steering the *Silver Star* down the creek when something hit me on the head. I think someone had hidden on the boat, sir, and—"

"That's right. Our old friend, Scarface."

"I thought it must be something like that, though I never saw him. I never heard him, either. Just a whack on the head that knocked me overboard. I've a sort of confused recollection of hearing a scream then, and a revolver shot. But I was more than half dazed, sir, and it's all very muddled. When I came to my senses, I was splashing in the water, and the *Silver Star* was nearly out of sight."

"Well, it was no good swimming after it, sir. I was pretty well fed up because I thought the womenfolk had been kidnapped. I'm real glad to see the young lady here, well and unharmed. How did she—"

"That's another story. Go on with yours."

"There really isn't any more, sir. I just swam to the nearest shore, and I've been messing about in the swamps and bogs ever since. I thought I'd never get back to the house. And I didn't know whether I'd find you all here when I did. Where's Mr. Hardaker, sir? I hope he's all right."

"Yes, he's all right. Keeping watch upstairs. I'll tell him at once that the prodigal has returned. Did you cross the creek by the stepping-stones?"

"Yes, sir."

"You didn't see anyone hanging around?"

"Haven't seen a soul, sir, since I was knocked out of the *Silver Star*."

The House of Sleep

"You've been luckier than we have. But I expect Mr. Hardaker'll tell you all about it. We've a job of work on. Have some more coffee."

Mr. Knight hurried upstairs again. He returned before long, bristling and business-like.

"Come on, Mr. Downes. One person's found our stepping-stones already. And he may have been seen. We don't want anyone to get to the hut before us. Ready?"

"Yes," said Henry. "I'm ready."

He looked at Aileen. She smiled encouragement at him. Cheerfully he followed Mr. Knight out into the yard.

They crept cautiously through the kitchen garden to the backhouse, stopping occasionally to listen. No sound disturbed the stillness of the night. They caught no glimpse of an enemy.

AS Porter had said, the stepping-stones were now visible above the surface of the sluggish water, stretching across the second arm of the creek. Mr. Knight led the way, striding rapidly over the stones to the mainland. Here the beginning of a narrow path showed clearly in the moonlight.

The path twisted and turned among the bushes, avoiding the marshy land on either side. It was evidently not much used. As they progressed it grew fainter and more swampy.

They came eventually to a small wooden hut in a tiny clearing, quite hidden from casual observation by the bushes that surrounded it. The hut was windowless and in good repair. It had a strong, close-fitting door secured by a padlock.

"Shall we have to break it open?" asked Henry.

"I think not," replied Mr. Knight. He drew a bunch of keys from his pocket. "There's no point in calling our friends' attention to what we're doing. One of these should manage it."

After he had fiddled with the keys for a while the padlock succumbed. He pushed the creaking door open and flashed a light into the hut.

"Yes, this is Wilson's darkroom," he remarked, noting the work bench crowded with chemicals and photographic apparatus. "And if no light gets in, none can get out. Come in and shut the door. There's a lamp here. If you'll light it we can have a careful look around."

Henry lit the oil lamp on the bench, and they commenced their search. Wilson had been a very tidy man. Everything in the hut was neatly labelled and stored away in the small space available. The search did not take long. Its results were completely negative.

"I'm afraid we've drawn a blank, old chappie," said Mr. Knight. "I was rather hoping we might have got on to the track of something here."

He picked up a cardboard box labelled "UNDEVELOPL." "Methodical bloke, he was," he murmured. "Undeveloped plates. Evidently he waited till he had a few before working on them." He shook the box gingerly. "There are some in. I wonder if it's worth while looking at them. Probably not. And yet..."

He opened the box. It was apparently empty. He shook it again, and could feel something move. He examined the inside more closely. A tightly fitting piece of cardboard had been wedged in, making a false bottom to the box.

"By jiminy!" he exclaimed. "That rather alters things. We're certainly going to have a look at this undeveloped plate—if it is a plate. Light that red lamp, Mr. Downes, and put the other out."

Henry obeyed, infected by his companion's excitement. As soon as their eyes grew accustomed to the dim red light, Mr. Knight ripped out the false bottom of the box. Beneath it was a thin rectangular object carefully wrapped in the usual black paper.

"It feels like a plate." He unwrapped the paper. "It is a plate. And undeveloped, too, whether it's been exposed or not. I wonder why Wilson took such pains to hide this?"

He carefully rewrapped the plate and put it in the box. "Let's have a bit more light on the scene. I think we'll see whether this has been exposed or not." Henry lit the other lamp. Blinking in the white light, they prepared solutions of the required chemicals, and collected the necessary dishes. Then the ordinary lamp was extinguished once more, and Mr. Knight unwrapped the mysterious plate again.

"I've got an idea we may find something interesting on this," he said, as he laid it in a tray and poured developer over it. "After all, it's a good way of keeping a secret, isn't it?"

They both watched with growing excitement as the developer did its work. Black patches appeared on the creamy whiteness of the plate, and gradually coalesced into a pattern which conveyed nothing at all to the watchers.

"Looks like an ordinary landscape," murmured Mr. Knight doubtfully. "We'll see better when it's fixed."

But when the various processes were completed, they both stared at the plate in disappointment. It was a very ordinary photograph, nothing more or less than a view of the creek with the stepping-stones showing up plainly.

"That's not going to help us much," muttered Henry, disgusted.

"Fraid not, old chappie. And yet there must be some reason why Wilson—" Mr. Knight broke off, holding the wet plate nearer the light. "By jiminy! Have another look at this. Notice anything about the third stone from the right?"

"Can't say I do. Except that there's a sort of streak."

"That's right. It's an overhanging willow branch, and it's pointing directly at that third stone. May be the purest coincidence, of course. But it's out of focus, and Wilson could, if he'd wanted, have arranged the camera so that the branch would point to any other stone. Is there any significance in the fact that it points to the third?"

"Well, it's funny that he should take such trouble to hide a simple view like this."

"Very funny! And there's nothing else on the plate that means anything to us. I think we ought to have a look at that third stone, Mr. Downes."

"So do I," agreed Henry, his excitement returning.

Leaving the enigmatic plate in a drying rack, they locked up the hut and returned to the creek. There was no difficulty, even in the pale moonlight, in locating the spot from which the photograph had been taken, and thus identifying the third stepping-stone from the right.

After gazing round to make sure that no one was in sight, Mr. Knight flashed his torch on the stone. It looked precisely like its fellows, roughly cut, rectangular, half covered with moss.

"Seems very natural, doesn't it?" he said.

"Will it move?" suggested Henry.

They tried. The stone was steady enough when pressure was applied from above, as in stepping on it; but when they pushed against it sideways, it certainly did move.

In a moment Mr. Knight was up to his thighs in the creek, exerting himself to lift the stone. The portion above water came away from its base. The torch showed that this base had been hollowed out; and in the cavity, still covered by the sluggish water, lay a square parcel carefully wrapped in waterproof sheeting.

"Feels like a tin box," said Henry, lifting the parcel out of the cavity.

"A tin box it will be," agreed Mr. Knight cheerfully.

"And it contains those missing bonds, or I'm a Dutchman. Come on, old chappie! We'd better take it back to the house, and let Robert Porter open it."

CHAPTER XV

AILEEN admitted them into the kitchen when they knocked, and her blue eyes opened wide at sight of the rectangular package.

"Whatever have you got there?" she asked.

"A present for a good little girl," smiled Mr. Knight. He glanced at Robert Porter who was staring at him with something like fear in his broad face. "Nothing wrong, is there?"

"No." Porter advanced a step, reaching out a hand toward the package. "Is this—?"

"Don't know yet. Where's Benn?"

"Upstairs with Mr. Hardaker."

"We'll have Hardaker down, I think. The more witnesses to the opening of this box the better."

A call brought the solicitor down, shivering a little from his vigil.

"Nippy up there with the windows open," he said. "I've told Benn to keep moving from back to front. He'll be able to watch both sides of the house, and keep himself warm at the same time. Hullo! What's this?"

Mr. Knight explained. "I suggest that Mr. Porter should open it in our presence."

"Quite right," agreed Jonas Hardaker. "Come on, Porter! Satisfy our curiosity."

Porter obeyed. There was an obvious reluctance in his movements.

The House of Sleep

The waterproof coverings were soon removed from the package. But the steel box thus disclosed offered more difficulty. It was locked; and the lock was a good one. A hammer and a chisel were required before they could make any impression on it.

Eventually, however, they managed to force it open. Robert Porter looked through the documents crammed into the box, and the frown on his brow grew deeper.

"Yes," he said wearily. "These are the stolen bonds."

"All of them?" asked Hardaker.

"I think so. Lord! I'd never have believed that Wilson was a thief!"

"I'm afraid there's no doubt about it," said Mr. Knight. "Smith's information was correct—so far as it went. Wilson certainly hid that box under the stepping-stone."

"I think it was jolly clever of you to find it," Aileen included Henry in her commendation. "A real smack in the eye for The Owl. You succeeded where his men failed."

"You certainly did!" Hardaker joined in the congratulations. "All because you were sharp enough to notice that Wilson's fingers were stained. Just shows how human these master criminals are, doesn't it? Make mistakes like the rest of us. And the same mistake that stains and draws the necessary deduction from them is going to cost The Owl fifty thousand pounds."

"I shouldn't be too sure of that yet," objected Mr. Knight drily. "Our friend is not easily discouraged. And if he discovers that we have found the bonds—"

"But he couldn't do that! How could he possibly?"

"It's never wise to underestimate your enemy, old chappie. Give him credit for a certain amount of intelligence. We've been watching for him. We can be pretty sure that he's been watching us. If he's seen our little expedition to the hut in the marshes, it will not require a great deal of imagination for him to guess what has happened, will it?"

"You're still suggesting that he'll attack us again?" cried Aileen.

"Well, there's something here now that makes us worth attacking."

"Dear me!" muttered Hardaker testily. "You're the most persistent young man I've ever met. I'd better get back upstairs and help Benn to keep watch."

When he had gone, Robert Porter looked round appealingly.

"What shall I do with these?" he asked, eyeing the bonds with distaste.

"Hide them," said Mr. Knight. "It doesn't matter much where. If The Owl doesn't get in they'll be safe enough. If he does, he'll make you tell him where they are."

"You're a very cheerful sort of person, aren't you?" said Aileen, pulling a face at him. "But we might as well do what we can. What do you say, Henry? Any suggestions?"

"Yes," replied Henry promptly. "Put 'em under the coals in the coal-cellar. I'd an aunt once who kept all her money there."

"Filthy lucre it must have been. But it's an idea. Good as anywhere else, don't you think, Uncle Bob?"

"I suppose so," agreed Porter dully. "Anywhere out of my sight."

He walked out of the kitchen, looking tired and old. After burying the steel box under a heap of coals, Aileen and Henry joined him in the lounge.

It was clear that Mr. Knight anticipated further trouble, and the thought was not very comforting. Aileen was worried about her uncle, who sat in a brooding silence very different from his usual heartiness. They discussed the situation uneasily and spasmodically, with frequent long pauses during which they all listened intently for any sound from inside.

Nothing could be heard, yet everyone was on the qui vive, fully expecting something to happen. Half an hour passed, and the tension became almost unbearable.

Then, with startling suddenness, Hardaker called from upstairs:

"Can you come up? There's something going on outside."

Mr. Knight was up the stairs in a flash, with Henry and Aileen close behind him. They entered the little room above the hall, and joined Hardaker at the window.

"Look!" he whispered, pointing to the further bank of the creek. "He's just come up the road."

The figure of a man was bending over the dinghy, busy with the mooring rope. He had just unfastened it when a second man appeared from the bushes. They had a short conversation, after which the first man refastened the mooring rope to its post. The second man stood near the

water edge, facing downstream, and the watchers could see a succession of tiny flashes come from something he held in his hands.

"He's signalling," muttered Hardaker. "With a powerful lamp. 'Anyone read Morse?'"

"Yes," said Mr. Knight. "He hasn't started his message yet. I'll watch him. You all look downstream and see if you can distinguish any reply."

Though the lamp was not directed toward the house, it was easy enough to read the flashes.

"Send more men. Bonds in house. Must attack again! Well, that's pretty definite. Evidently they did watch our expedition to the hut. Anyone locate the spot he's signalling to?"

No one had seen any answering flash.

"Probably round a bend of the creek," said Aileen, "and hidden from us by the bushes."

"Maybe there's a boat down there," suggested Benn who had crept in unobserved.

Hardaker turned on him angrily.

"Why the devil have you left your post?"

"Well, sir, I heard you call, and I thought—"

"It's not your business to think. For all we know this may be a ruse to distract our attention from the other side of the house. Get back at once."

"Very good, sir."

BENN returned to the room across the corridor. Struck by the sudden fear that Hardaker's suggestion might be correct, Henry went after him. But the outlook from the window at the back was reassuring. The stepping-stones showed up deserted in the moonlight. Nothing was stirring in the empty countryside.

He rejoined the others. The two men were still visible on the bank, still flashing their lamp.

"We're simply repeating the message," said Mr. Knight doubtfully. "I wonder if you're right, Hardaker."

"There's no one about at the back," reported Henry.

"That's good! But I can't understand why these fellows—Hullo! They're saying something else now."

There was silence for a while. Everyone watched the flickering dots and dashes from the distant lamp.

"No sense at all," Mr. Knight moved away from the window. "Either it's some kind of code, or they're fooling—"

A bright light flashed suddenly from the doorway, dazzling.

"Perhaps the latter," said a smooth cold voice. "Put your hands up, please."

Yellow flame spurted from Mr. Knight's pocket, and the light went out. Instantaneously another sprang up, and its glare shone on the barrels of four revolvers pointed directly at the occupants of the room.

"Don't do that again, please," said the familiar voice. "I've no desire to kill you all."

It was Mr. Smith, undoubtedly. Mr. Knight slowly raised his hands above his head. The others, blinking in the strong light, followed his example.

"Search them!"

A masked man stepped forward from the darkness behind the light. Quickly and expertly he ran his hands over the prisoners' clothing, removing the revolvers which they carried.

"Bring the other in."

Struggling desperately, Benn was brought in and thrown to the floor at Hardaker's feet.

"Now," continued the invisible Mr. Smith. "Where's Porter?"

No one replied.

"I hope to teach you all to be more reasonable." There was horrible menace in the cold voice. "Find him, Petel. You others come down into the lounge where we can see one another."

Henry glanced at Aileen. He could see that she was more troubled about her uncle's disappearance than anything else. The fourth masked man returned from his search.

"Can't find him anywhere, Boss," he reported.

"Take a look round outside. Perhaps he opened that back door and sneaked out either before we came or just after our arrival."

"Okay, Boss."

The shadow of a frown flickered across Mr. Smith's face.

"You people are not making things any easier for yourselves," he said when the man had gone. "I know that the stolen bonds are in this house—"

"How do you know that?" asked Hardaker.

"Never mind. Will you tell me where they are? Or

The House of Sleep

must I renew my experiment with this young lady?" "I'll tell you!" snapped Henry. "They're in the coal-house. Under the coals." "Go get them," Mr. Smith spoke to another of his men. The man hurried out. There was a tense uncomfortable silence. It seemed an age before he returned. And then the result of his quest was startling.

"No, Boss," he said, shaking his head. "Not a sign of 'em!"

CHAPTER XVI

SMITH'S evil face was contorted with rage as he looked at the prisoners.

"So that's how you've planned things!" he snarled. "Porter's gone off with the bonds, and you've remained here to bluff me."

Mr. Knight laughed aloud. "You give us too much credit, old chappie. It's a great idea, I'll admit—but no one here thought of it."

"You mean that Porter's done it on his own?" "Precisely. Something of a brainwave, wasn't it? He seems to have put a rather big spoke in your wheel."

"He can't get far away." "Can't he?" Mr. Knight laughed again as the roar of an out-board motor burst into the silence of the night. "It rather looks as though he's—"

With a muttered curse, Smith unfastened one of the shutters and flung it open. Through the window the dinghy could be seen just leaving the farther bank of the creek. Seated in it was a stout figure recognizable even at that distance as Robert Porter.

"Apparently he's off for the police, old chappie." The rage died out of Smith's face, leaving his expression cold and malignant.

"Yes," he said very softly. "I suppose it will take them about an hour to get here. There is plenty of time before you need die, and I should like to be sure that you are not bluffing. You—" pointing his revolver at Hardaker—"I have no quarrel with you. Tell me the truth and your life shall be spared. Were those bonds hidden under the coals?"

Hardaker shrugged. "I know nothing about that. The box was opened in my presence in the kitchen, but I had gone upstairs before it was decided where to put the bonds."

"Is your story the same?" Smith turned to Benn. "I haven't a story," muttered the servant. "I didn't even know there were any bonds."

"Perhaps we'd better search the house again." "You'd better make yourself scarce," sneered Hardaker. "Or you're going to find yourself in—"

"Perhaps you are right," Smith raised his revolver. "In a way, I am sorry to kill you all—"

"Is that really necessary?" asked Mr. Knight caustically. "I'm afraid it is. If you hadn't removed my mask . . . But you must see that I couldn't run the risk of any of you recognizing me in the future." The revolver pointed directly between Mr. Knight's eyes. "And I'm not at all sure that you won't be better out of the way in any case. You seem rather a remarkable young—"

Smith broke off. Through the silence of the night outside shrilled a whistle, unmistakable in its piercing quality. "Here come the police," said Mr. Knight. "You'll have to get a move on, old chappie."

Three revolver shots rang out in quick succession. A large motor-boat started up in the distance. Its roar grew rapidly louder as it approached.

A flame of hatred sprang up in Smith's eyes. His finger closed round the trigger.

Mr. Knight acted so quickly that no one saw precisely what happened. With a swift kick he knocked over the table on which the lamp stood. At the same moment he pulled Henry and Aileen to the floor.

The lamp splintered into fragments, plunging the room into darkness. Several flashes of flame spurted and revolvers barked. Then Smith's voice rang out:

"Get going, boys! We can't stop to make sure that we have finished this job. Scatter! Meet at the boat."

Hurried footsteps clattered out of the room and all was silent.

A voice called through the barricade at the front door: "Hello! Anybody here?"

"Yes, old chappie. There's quite a few of us here. Who are you?"

"Inspector Davies, Essex County Constabulary. I understand you're having trouble of some sort."

"Not much wrong with your understanding. I suppose you haven't a visiting card with you?"

"Meaning what?"

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter." Mr. Knight began to pull down the barricade. "We're unarmed now, so we couldn't resist in any case. And I expect you really are Inspector Davies. One gets into the habit of querying these little things, you know."

"It is Inspector Davies," said Aileen positively. "I know his voice quite well."

She helped the others to remove the piled-up furniture. Soon the doorway was free.

The inspector entered the hall, followed by two constables in uniform. Henry looked out. He could see a large motor-boat moored at the bottom of the garden, and several more policemen searching the island. It really did seem as though their troubles were over at last.

Davies was a big man with honest, ugly features. He made no attempt to hide his bewilderment as he surveyed the occupants of the hall.

"Now, then," he asked, using the time-honored formula. "What's all this about?"

Aileen was gazing at him anxiously. "Where's Uncle Bob?"

He glanced at one of the constables and nodded. "It was him you saw, then," he said.

"Yes, I thought I recognized him."

"You saw us in a dinghy a little way down the creek, Miss Porter. We were waiting for the signal—some of us came by land, and some by water—and we didn't want to disclose our presence prematurely. Constable Grimes here felt sure it was your uncle, so we let him pass without challenging him."

"That's all right then," Aileen breathed a sigh of relief. "Evidently he was making for Marshend. But I say, how did you get to know about us?"

"Your maids, Miss. They'd been stranded in the marshes, but they managed to get out and find Sergeant Walton at Mereside. They told such a blood-curdling story about what was happening here that Walton got busy on the phone straight away, and we decided to come in force. I don't know whether my men have caught—"

"They've a hidden somewhere down the creek," said Mr. Knight. "It might be a good plan to send yours down after them."

"I'll do that at once," Davies gave the necessary instructions. "Now suppose you tell me all about it."

They gave him a brief outline of what had happened. His pleasant homely face became grave as he listened.

"Two of them were murdered," he muttered, "and another man probably killed! Holy smoke! I must get word of this to the Chief Constable at once. And I'll have to send out a general warning in case these men escape. Can you describe any of them?"

They had to explain that the men had been masked, and that Mr. Smith was the only one whose face they had seen. Davies wrote down their description in detail, then sent a constable to telephone headquarters from the nearest village.

ONE by one the police began to drift back to the house with a confession of comparative failure. They had managed to catch only one of the criminals. This was the man whose shoulder Henry had broken with the poker. He had become separated from his companions, and had been arrested while struggling through the marshes.

Of Smith and the others there was no word. Nor had any sign of their boat been seen.

"They won't get far away," said Davies with assurance. "There's a cordon round the county by now. And boats are watching out at sea."

He turned to the prisoner, and tried to question him. The man refused to talk at all. He was carried off to gaol, and the search went on.

In the reaction following the excitement, Henry found himself yawning. Davies noticed it.

"You all look fagged out," he said kindly. "Why not get a bit of sleep? You can leave everything to me now."

"That's good advice," agreed Mr. Knight. "And I for one am going to take it." His gray eyes twinkled. "That is Miss Porter's hospitality will stretch to a draper, a vacuum salesman, a solicitor and his servant."

"The first two are frauds, I'm afraid," smiled Aileen. "But very good friends for all that. Come on! I'll show you which rooms you can have."

What a relief it was to get between clean white sheets,

The House of Sleep

to be able to relax in the snowy comfort with the knowledge that it was no longer necessary to be continually on the qui vive! Henry took two or three deep breaths of contentment, and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the sun was blazing into his room, and an appetizing smell of cooking bacon floated up from downstairs.

He dressed quickly and hurried down. There was no one about in the hall. He glanced out of the doorway. At the bottom of the garden, Inspector Davies, Mr. Knight and two constables were busily engaged, dragging something out of the water.

He walked slowly and reluctantly toward them. A sudden intuition told him what they had found. And when he reached them he saw that he was right.

"Morning, old chappie," said Mr. Knight cheerfully. "Another of your victims! You made a proper job of this one."

Henry stared at the body of the man Scarface which had floated up with the incoming tide, and the brightness went out of the morning.

"You mustn't worry about it, Mr. Downes," said Davies kindly. "He only got what was coming to him."

As they were carrying the limp body to the boathouse, an official motorcycle came roaring down the further bank of the creek. A plainclothesman dismounted, propped up his machine, and splashed over the causeway.

Davies hurried to meet him. After a short conversation, the plainclothesman saluted and went back to his machine. The inspector rejoined the others.

"Not a sign of Robert Porter," he announced, his pleasant face grave and worried. "He didn't go to Marshend, and we can't find anyone who's seen him. Looks as though he's been drowned."

"There's another alternative," Mr. Knight glanced round. "I wouldn't dare suggest this if Miss Porter was within hearing. But he acted very queerly when we found the bonds. It is possible, isn't it, that he's run off with them?"

CHAPTER XVII

TO the hectic night succeeded a rather wearisome day of waiting and wondering. There was much coming and going, much questioning and repetition. Some of the inkling of the situation had leaked out, and reporters buzzed round the house like persistent flies. But no new developments occurred. In spite of the police cordon, Smith and his men had not been captured. The single prisoner resolutely refused to talk. There was no news of Robert Porter.

And so the day went on. Police surgeons arrived and examined the bodies of the murdered men. The coroner commenced his inquiry, and adjourned it at once. In the middle of the afternoon a great man arrived, no less a personage than Chief Inspector Dransfield of New Scotland Yard.

Inspector Davies had been to Marshend to meet his car, and had given him particulars of the case as they drove back together. Though he listened politely to the recital, Dransfield did not seem to pay much attention. And as soon as they had crossed the causeway, he left his companion and approached Mr. Knight and Henry, who were talking in the garden.

"Hallo, Paul," he said without preamble, thrusting out a huge hand. "I got your wire. I pulled the strings and here I am. What's it all about?"

"Ssh, Jim!" Mr. Knight took the proffered hand and shook it heartily. "I'm glad to see you. But don't give me away. I'm Clarence Knight, and I sell vacuum cleaners—though I don't think Mr. Downes here believes it. Meet a new friend, Jim. Mr. Downes is a great hand with a poker. He's also invented a special method of wakening young ladies who have fallen asleep."

Dransfield shook hands with Henry who couldn't help blushing whenever this early exploit of his was mentioned. "Quit fooling, Paul." The Yard man grunted. "You haven't called me down here for nothing. Why the masquerade?"

"We're dealing with The Owl, old chappie!" "You don't mean the real—the original—"

"Yes. The Owl you and I had dealings with before. We half expected him to come back to life, didn't we?"

"By crimes!" muttered Dransfield. "This is real news! How do you know, Paul?"

"You'll see as soon as I tell you just what has happened. There's no mistaking his handiwork. I came here yesterday because I had a tip that he might be somewhere around. I found a rather peculiar state of affairs when I arrived,

and I knew that my tip was correct. I had to give a name of some sort, and I didn't want to use my own because he knows it."

"He knows you, too."

"Yes, but his underlings don't. And he hasn't turned up in person yet, so far as I know."

"Wasn't Mr. Smith the Owl, then?" asked Henry.

"I'm sure he wasn't. I've never seen The Owl except in one of his numerous disguises, but I'll swear he looks quite a harmless sort of individual. A man with a face so evil as Smith's could not hide his true character under any disguise."

"Well, I'm glad you sent for me, Paul," said Dransfield. "Let's have the dope."

"I thought you wouldn't like to be left out of it. I'll start right at the beginning." Mr. Knight lit a cigarette. "First about the tip I had. I can't betray a confidence by mentioning any names, but it came through a man who was one of The Owl's gang in the old days, and has since been going straight. As a matter of fact, his wife came to see me, very perturbed because of a message he had received. This was from The Owl and it told him to report immediately at a certain place. The poor woman had copied some figures from the note. She thought they were some kind of code, but actually they represented cross bearings on an ordnance map. When I worked them out I found myself directed to a spot a little way down this creek."

"I decided I'd better spy out the land before doing anything but a bicycle and trundled about. This house seemed rather promising—and I dropped slap into it! By jiminy, I'd never have believed this desolate countryside could hold so much excitement!"

"I've heard a second-hand story from Davies," said Dransfield. "Let's hear it from you."

So once again the whole ground had to be gone over. Mr. Knight told the facts briefly and accurately. This house seemed rather promising—and I dropped slap into it! By jiminy, I'd never have believed this desolate countryside could hold so much excitement!"

"What about this anonymous friend of yours who got the note?" he asked then. "Did he come?"

"No. His wife persuaded him to ignore it."

"Nothing doing there, then. Looks as though Porter's clothes and the bonds, does it?"

"Afraid so. If he'd been drowned, I think some trace of him would have been found. And he had quite a good start from Smith and his men."

"There was the wire across the creek," Henry put in. "Perhaps he—"

"He knew about that, old chappie. He'd be able to avoid it easily enough."

"Well, what do we do next?" asked Dransfield. "Any suggestions?"

"Don't know that I have, Jim. Circulate what descriptions we can of the missing men—including Porter—and wait for something to turn up. I've been over the house pretty thoroughly, and found nothing."

"You didn't bring me down here just to tell me that."

"You read me like a book," grinned Mr. Knight. "Such penetration is—"

"He became serious. "Ever know The Owl to give anything up once he set out after it?"

"No. I see what you mean." Dransfield pulled at his heavy moustache. "You don't know what you're expecting?"

"HAVEN'T the foggiest notion. But I'm expecting something. Perhaps we'll get a brainwave later. Come along into the house and meet Miss Porter. You'll like her. And look here, Mr. Downes! Not a word to anyone about me being anything but a vacuum salesman."

"All right," agreed Henry. "But no one believes it now, you know."

They found Aileen sitting alone in the lounge, looking rather blue. Mr. Knight introduced Dransfield.

"Where's Hardaker?" he asked.

"He's in the cellar with Benn, making—a coffin."

"A coffin?"

"One of the constables was going to throw poor Rover's body into the creek. I didn't like that—he was such a faithful old soul. We have another dog buried on the far side of the creek. Mr. Hardaker offered to see about it for me. There's no reason why we shouldn't, is there?"

"Not the slightest." Mr. Knight's voice was very gentle. "I'm so sorry to add to your troubles just now, but Inspector Dransfield wants to ask you a few questions about your uncle."

Henry wandered out of the room while the girl was being questioned. He was feeling irritable and restless, far

The House of Sleep

from happy. It was quite evident that Mr. Knight considered The Owl to be still a danger; and Mr. Knight, apparently, was a person whose opinion counted for something. Certainly Inspector Dransfield thought highly of him. A sort of private detective he must be, Henry thought. He strolled into the kitchen. Kate and Susan had been persuaded to return, and were now preparing tea. After exchanging a few words with them he wandered out again and made his way into the cellars, where the sound of hammering told him that Hardaker and Benn were busy with their task. He stood watching them for a moment, then wearily climbed the stairs again. He couldn't keep still. His depression had grown stronger. He felt that something dreadful was going to happen.

In the hall Aileen passed him, running up to her bedroom. Her eyes were filled with tears, and he guessed that Mr. Knight had told her their suspicion that her uncle must have absconded with the bonds. Curse Mr. Knight! Curse everything! . . .

He peeped into the hall as he passed. Dransfield and his companion were deep in conversation. Henry didn't want to hear any more. He was sick and tired of the whole business. He passed out into the garden.

There was no escape for him. Even in the garden uniformed constables were pacing, plainclothes officers still diligently searching for any clue.

"Oh, hell!" muttered Henry Downes; and wished he were back in Brixton.

He stood looking around over the flat, desolate countryside. Beyond the garden there was no living thing in sight, but he knew that the police were equally busy in Haslam's house, half a mile up the road. He wondered how Smith and his men had managed to break through the cordon. Perhaps they hadn't tried to get through. Perhaps they were hiding in the marshes, waiting until the hue and cry slackened. Perhaps even now they were planning further deviltry. . . .

After a while Hardaker and Benn emerged from the house, carrying a couple of spades and the large box they had made for the burial of the big black dog. A constable helped them with it as far as the causeway, then returned to his post. They carried their burden to the far bank of the creek, and commenced to dig, their figures only dimly visible in the gathering dusk.

Henry watched them idly. The ground was soft, and it did not take long to dig the shallow grave. They had completed their task and were turning away from the mound when a shot rang out.

Henry stiffened. He saw Benn spin round and drop to the ground. More shots followed, and Hardaker dropped, too.

Then there was silence.

CHAPTER XVIII

AS Henry stood staring, Mr. Knight dashed out of the house, followed by Dransfield. They ran toward him.

"What is it, Downes? Seen anything?" He explained. Their eyes, accustomed to the lamplight in the lounge, could distinguish nothing in the dusk-shadowed bank of the creek. They ran across the causeway, with constables and plainclothesmen close at their heels.

As they approached the two figures lying in the mud, one of them scrambled to his feet. It was Jonas Hardaker, grimy and dishevelled.

"There were three of them," he cried. "In the bushes—just there. They can't be far away."

"Scatter, boys!" roared Dransfield. "Make sure of them this time!" He blew a shrill blast on a whistle. "One of you run up the road and meet the boys from the other house. Tell 'em what's wanted." He turned back to Hardaker. "Hurt anywhere?"

"No. It's just that I thought the ground was the safest place. But I'm afraid they've got poor Benn."

They bent to examine the servant. He was unconscious, breathing heavily, and blood seeped from his left elbow. "Shot through the arm," said Mr. Knight. "I think he's only fainted. We'd better carry him back to the house."

"Right," agreed Dransfield. "Can you three manage him? I'd like to keep an eye on things out here."

"Sure. We'll look after him."

Between them Mr. Knight, Hardaker and Henry carried the unconscious man across the creek and laid him on the settle in the hall. His wound proved to be slight, and it was not long before he opened his eyes.

"They—they're in the bushes!" he gasped at once.

"We know, old chappie."

"I saw a shadow there, sir. I was just going to call out when—" The man's frightened gaze rested on Hardaker. "You—yourself all right, sir?"

"Yes. Lie still. Don't worry."

Mr. Knight went to the door and Henry followed him. Night had fallen quickly. They could see the occasional flash of a torch from beyond the creek, and hear confused shouting as the search of the marshes progressed. They stood in silence, watching and listening.

"You were right," said Henry at last. "About something more happening, I mean."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Knight absently. "I wish I knew what it meant." He drew a cigarette from his case. In the middle of lighting it, he stopped abruptly. "Where's Miss Porter?"

"She went up to her room."

"You'd have thought the noise would have— See if she's still there, will you?"

In a sudden panic Henry dashed up the stairs to Aileen's room and rapped loudly on the door. There was no response. He tried the handle. The door opened. The room was empty.

He ran downstairs again. Aileen was not in the kitchen. Neither Kate nor Susan had seen her. No one had seen her since she passed Henry in the hall.

They searched the house, calling her name loudly. They searched the garden. They saw no sign of her.

"Someone's got her!" cried Henry frantically as they returned to the house. "Someone carried her off while we were all—"

"Steady, old chappie!" Mr. Knight laid a hand on his shoulder. "It may be that we've been fooled, that the shooting was designed to draw us away from the house so that Miss Porter might be kidnapped. On the other hand, it's quite possible that she's left of her own accord."

"Why? Why should she run away and—"

"I'd just told her about her uncle. It may be that she had some idea of finding him, and took the opportunity when—"

"Oh, you don't believe that! You know she wouldn't do that! It's The Owl again! He's—"

"Don't be so damned silly!" There was a rough kindness in Hardaker's voice. "They can't possibly get away with her. There are too many police about."

But when Inspector Dransfield, summoned to hear of the new development, reported that so far no trace of The Owl's men had been seen, Hardaker had to admit that he was wrong.

"They come and go like phantoms," he muttered. "They must know some way across the marshes. A firm path that enables them to move about much more quickly than their pursuers. And it seems to me that they must have a pretty good hiding-place, there, too."

"Looks like it." Dransfield grunted in agreement. "One thing I'm sure of—they can't be far away. We'll get some more men, and go through the whole district with a fine-tooth comb. It's darned unlucky that a man doesn't leave footprints in these marshes. But if they've a hide-out anywhere round, we'll find it!"

He got in touch with county headquarters straight away by means of a field telephone which had been rigged up during the afternoon. After consultation with the local authorities, he arranged for further detachments of men to be sent to various points of the compass, with instructions to search the marshes thoroughly, gradually converging on the house.

"You're going to start tonight?" asked Hardaker in some surprise, when he heard of the arrangements.

"Tomorrow may be too late."

It was a weird experience. The search had been so organized that there was no need for any shouting of instructions. The silence was extraordinary; though all knew they were surrounded by scores of police, they could hear nothing but the squelch of their own boots through the mud. The night was dark; but through it, from every direction, came tiny flashes of light as unseen searchers used their torches.

Slowly but surely, the searchers were converging on the house. Standing in the garden, Henry could see the flashes of light gradually growing nearer. And as the first comers began to drift in with their confessions of failure, his heart sank lower.

Inspector Dransfield was bustling about from point to point, receiving reports. These were of a monotonous simi-

The House of Sleep

larity. No lurking figures had been seen, no place found where it was possible for men to hide.

Before long it became apparent that the huge hunt had been a complete failure. Impossible though it seemed, Alien and her abductors had vanished completely.

"They just can't have got away!" muttered Dransfield obstinately. "Even before we started this search there was a cordon round the county."

"Obviously they hadn't got away before," said Mr. Knight, "or they couldn't have attacked Hardaker and Benn. But now—" He shrugged. "We're dealing with a clever man, Jim. This abduction of Miss Porter—"

"You're admitting now that she's been kidnapped?" asked Henry miserably.

"I'm afraid we must. If she'd run off on her own we should have found her. The Owl has carried out some clever plan for spiriting her away. Jim says no one could get through the cordon; but I've a feeling that Miss Porter is miles away by now. As you know, I've a healthy respect for The Owl."

"But what's the good of talking like that? As though we were utterly helpless to—"

"We are helpless—for the moment."

"But we must do something. We can't just let him run off with her like this, and—"

"Listen! There's not a thing we can do tonight—beyond the usual police routine which is already functioning. By now, every police station in England has a full description of Miss Porter—as well as her uncle. She may be found almost at once; I'm not too hopeful about that. But we shall have news of her before long."

"I don't see—"

"Well, why has The Owl kidnapped her? Obviously to hold her as a kind of hostage for the bonds. He'll communicate with us. Isn't that right, Jim?"

"Sure!" growled Dransfield.

"And his communication may give us a clue. Not a great hope, I admit. But the best we have at present."

In the morning, this prediction was fulfilled. The postman brought a letter addressed to Chief Inspector Dransfield which had been posted at Marshland late the previous night. It was brief and to the point:

"Many thanks, old friend, for allowing me to take the girl so easily. You know why, of course. As soon as I have the bonds she will be returned unharmed—provided you don't take too long about it."

This message was printed in block lettering, and bore the familiar small picture of an owl.

"Haven't taken him long to find out I'm here," muttered Dransfield, passing the note along.

"But it doesn't tell us anything!" cried Henry as soon as he had read it.

"It tells us three things," said Mr. Knight thoughtfully. "First, that The Owl has managed to convey Miss Porter to some place that he considers safe. Second, that he didn't get Robert Porter, who is either drowned or at large with the bonds."

"And the third thing?"

"Well, that we're in rather a mess, old chappie. Because, even if we wished to free Miss Porter by handing over the bonds, we couldn't do it. We've got to find 'em first."

CHAPTER XIX

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast, Mr. Knight had a hurried consultation with Inspector Dransfield. Then he beckoned to Henry, and led the way to the boat-house.

"Where are we going?" asked Henry, without much interest.

"Just a run down the creek. Push off, please."

The outboard motor started up, and the little dinghy moved off at half speed towards the sea. Henry watched the sunlight sparkling on the ripples and sighed. He remembered that he was supposed to be on a holiday. He smiled bitterly.

"Not feeling too chirpy, are you?" suggested Mr. Knight kindly. "It's a rotten situation—I know. I've been through it myself. But don't get too despondent about it all—yet. There's one thing we can say about The Owl: He doesn't kill for the fun of killing."

"Smith would have tortured her!"

"He had a reason for that, hadn't he? And that reason is gone now. Things are pretty disastrous, I admit, but I'm sure Miss Porter is perfectly safe for the present."

"Well, that's something." Henry responded to the encouragement. "What are you doing now?" he asked more cheerfully.

"It's rather a forlorn hope, I'm afraid. We're looking for any trace of Robert Porter."

"Robert Porter! But why don't we—"

"Inspector Dransfield agrees with me that we must concentrate on him. In the first place, we ought to have a better chance of finding him. He is alone; and he has no experience of hiding from the police—which doesn't apply to The Owl. In the second place, we must recover those bonds. Then, if the worst comes to the worst, we shall be in a position to treat with The Owl."

"I see. Yes, I suppose you're right. But what are you expecting to find? The creek has been searched before, hasn't it?"

"It's been searched again and again. But that means nothing in police work. Apparently insignificant clues may be overlooked at the first attempt. They may develop after it. We've just got to keep on and on until we do find something."

"And if we don't?"

"Then we're beaten, old chappie. But it takes us a long time to admit that."

THE dinghy travelled slowly down the creek. Mr. Knight kept a close watch on the banks. He ran in occasionally to investigate something he had seen. He stopped to examine every bit of debris floating on the water.

They passed through the narrow channel marked out by posts where Henry had been flung from his boat to provide a target for Scarface. The wire, of course, had been removed. He shivered a little at the recollection.

Further down, the creek widened. They began to feel a slight swell from the sea. They were approaching the estuary.

Suddenly Mr. Knight stopped the engine. With an ear he kept listening. He was waiting. His keen gaze fitted from one side of the creek to the other.

"What do you think about that?" he murmured.

"About what?" asked Henry eagerly. "I don't see anything."

"Oh, yes, you do! You can see all that stuff floating on the water, collected round the rushes."

"Oh, that?" Henry was disappointed. "It's just oil."

"There's quite a lot of it, isn't there?"

"Well, I can't—Oh! You think Porter had an accident. His boat sank, and that's the oil from it?"

"No, I don't think that. There's far too much of it for one thing. And it wasn't here yesterday, for another. Looks to me as though some pretty big motor-driven craft was in this creek last night. Wonder if that's how The Owl's men got away?"

"But Hardaker was patrolling the creek. And there were boats watching out at sea."

"Yes. But it might be—"

Mr. Knight dropped the oar, and reached for a ball of fishline under the seat. To the freed end he tied a heavy bunch of keys, which he dropped overboard, allowing the line to run out until the bottom was reached.

"Yes," he murmured, drawing in the line again, "it's deep enough."

"Deep enough for what?" asked Henry, watching in amazement.

"A submarine, old chappie."

"Good Lord!"

"It's the only way I can explain all that oil—and the fact that The Owl was able to get Miss Porter away so easily. A very careful watch was being kept in the estuary, you know. But, of course, if a submarine was used. . . . And don't you remember? Smith told his men to make for the boat."

"Yes, I remember. But it—it sounds so incredible."

"Nothing is incredible where The Owl is concerned. He has always worked on a big scale. Probably he only started after these paltry bonds because they looked like easy pickings. He'll persist now, of course, because he's been thwarted." Mr. Knight lit a cigarette. "Let's see how the theory fits in with the facts."

"There was a short silence."

"It fits in all right," said Henry, after a while, "if you once admit that he owns a submarine. He could come and go as he liked." He hesitated. "All the same, there are two points—"

"Go on. I wonder if you're thinking the same as I am."

"Well, a submarine would explain how The Owl got his men away, through the cordon. But I can't understand how

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER XX

the men managed to reach the submarine after attacking Hardaker. And I can't understand how they got Aileen there, either."

"You've hit the nail precisely on the head. It seems impossible that those men could ever reach this part of the creek. And as for conveying Miss Porter here. . . They couldn't carry her; they didn't bring her down by water." Mr. Knight puffed away at his cigarette in silence again. "Of course the submarine would be gone by the time Hardaker started his patrol. Or at any rate submerged. And there's that big two-fold problem of how—By jiminy!" He dropped the cigarette and sat staring out at the sunlit water.

"By jiminy!" he repeated. "That would explain it!"

"What would explain it?"

Mr. Knight did not reply for a moment. He slowly turned toward Henry, his eyes narrowed.

"Suppose there never was an attack on Hardaker," he said softly as though making the suggestion to himself.

"But—"

"We've only his word for it—and Bann's. No one else saw anything of the attackers. He himself called them phantoms."

"Good Lord!" Henry stared in wide-eyed amazement. "But Bann was shot and—"

"A trifling flesh wound. A small price to pay for the successful kidnapping of Miss Porter. By jiminy! It explains everything!" Mr. Knight was suddenly galvanised into activity. "We must get back to the house straight away."

He started up the motor and turned the boat round. With the engine roaring at full speed, they raced back up the creek.

Henry wondered if his companion had gone mad. He couldn't understand the situation at all.

"Won't you tell me—" he began.

"I can't just yet, old chaps. I've got to think it out. But suppose that Aileen was in that coffin Hardaker was putting together, instead of the dog. How easy it would be for them to smuggle her aboard the submarine, unnoticed!"

Henry's heart sank as he realized the significance of what Mr. Knight was saying.

No further word was spoken until they reached the island. In the boathouse they found Bann, hampered by his bandaged arm, tinkering with the engine of the *Silver Star*.

"Where's Mr. Hardaker?" asked Mr. Knight, his voice pleasant as usual.

"I think he's in the house, sir," replied Bann.

"You might tell him I'd like a word with him."

"Yes, sir."

The servant hurried away. Mr. Knight's face became grim.

"You've got a gun, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Henry, wondering. "We all had one given us yesterday."

"Have it ready in your pocket. Watch Bann closely. He's dangerous. If he tries to start anything, shoot him without hesitation. Come on!"

THEY followed the servant up to the house. Henry was thrilling with excitement. He caught a glimpse now of what was in his companion's mind, and the incredible thought held him breathless. It was impossible—unthinkable! And yet . . .

The constable who was on duty stationed at the door saluted.

"Where's Inspector Dransfield?" asked Mr. Knight.

"In the lounge, sir."

"Thanks."

Mr. Knight opened the door of the lounge. Inspector Dransfield looked up from his papers as they entered.

"Hello," he said. "You're back soon. Find anything?"

"Yes." He informed Dransfield of his suspicions.

"Sure of your facts, Paul?" Dransfield inquired. "We checked up on Hardaker, you know."

"I know! There's a solicitor of that name in Leeds. He's on holiday in Essex at present with his manservant. But if this is him, I'm a Dutchman."

"By crimos! A old trick! Do you mean—"

"I mean precisely that Hardaker is The Owl, old chaps!"

But capturing The Owl was an entirely different matter; for at that moment, The Owl and his companion were swiftly making their getaway from the island, unseen and unobserved by the police. Sosh were The Owl's talents.

IT looked like war, with all the breaks on the enemy's side.

In the first place, Knight (he was Paul Grendon, famous private investigator, who had been engaged with Inspector Dransfield on many of the Yard's outstanding cases) discovered that his anonymous informer had been taken for a ride by The Owl's gang. That ended that source of information.

Then, Robert Porter was no sooner discovered in his hiding place than he was shanghaied away from there before the police or Grendon could get to him and learn why he had so mysteriously disappeared with the bonds. All in all, every move they made seemed to be anticipated by The Owl. The police were very much in the dark, and very much on the spot.

All search for the submarine, in which it was supposed Aileen had been abducted, was fruitless, too. In despair, Grendon finally made an appeal to the Admiralty for aid. Here, by the name of the Asdics, an anti-submarine detection branch of the Navy, he hoped to locate the whereabouts of the sinister underwater craft by the use of a secretly developed hydrophone which the department had perfected for the detection of enemy craft under water.

And here he met with his first success!

For a day and a night the police were able to keep track of the boat, awaiting an opportunity for attacking the gang without endangering the lives of the kidnapped victims. "It's all very well to say that The Owl has what he wants now," Grendon was saying twenty-four hours later in Dransfield's office. "He'll make Porter tell where the bonds are. We've lost them—we can do nothing more in that direction. The point is: Suppose The Owl recovers them, will he release Miss Porter?"

"You know as well as I," he said. "I've heard Henry fiercely. 'If we'd had them we might have bargained with him, but—'"

"And, of course, we don't know that he can recover them, even if he learns where they are. That's our first line of defence gone. We'd better start thinking about attack." Paul rose to his feet and paced restlessly about the office. "What about the submarine, Jim?" he asked suddenly.

Dransfield glanced through the papers on his desk. Then he rang a bell.

"Reports from the Admiralty?" he asked the clerk who entered. "Where are they?"

"None this morning, sir," replied the clerk. "That on the desk is the latest."

"Get them on the phone."

"Very good, sir."

The clerk retired, and in a few moments the telephone buzzed. Dransfield spoke briefly into it, then turned back to his companions with a scowl.

"They've lost the submarine," he announced.

"Lost it?" exclaimed Henry.

"Yes. There's nothing been heard of it since last night. They're using every effort to pick it up again, but—"

"We're in a bit of a hole now," said Paul softly.

There was a long silence. Henry gnawed at his fingertips. Dransfield sat staring gloomily into space. Paul resumed his pacing.

"Can we see the last report?" he asked, after a while.

Dransfield handed a paper over. It gave observations at approximately hourly intervals, of the progress of the strange submarine up the east coast. The last position, of which latitude and longitude were given, had been noted about eight p. m. After this there had been complete silence, as though the submarine had disappeared from the face of the earth.

Paul studied the report carefully. And suddenly a gleam of excitement sprang up in his gray eyes.

"Got a good atlas?" he asked. "No!—better still—let's call on the Admiralty."

"What is it?" queried Dransfield, brightening as he noted his friend's excitement.

"Don't know yet, old chaps. May be nothing. But I've got an idea—Come on!"

They hurried across to the Admiralty and were quickly shown into the office of Captain Farley, with whom Dransfield had just spoken on the telephone.

"I'm sorry to let you chaps down," he greeted them, offering cigarettes. He was a typical naval man, keen-eyed and alert. "But we can't get a smell of your mystery tub anywhere."

"Perhaps there's another way you can help us," sug-

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER XXI

gested Paul. "Can you show us, on a large scale map, the precise spot where the blooming old submarine was last heard?"

"Sure! I've just been looking it up." Captain Farley unrolled a chart, and indicated with a pencil a point on the coast of Suffolk. "There you are. Bearings were taken from Orford Ness and Felixstowe. She was quite close in. Can't understand her silence at all. If there were any reefs about— But there aren't. She can't have piled up anywhere."

Paul's face was a picture of eagerness as he studied the chart.

"Suppose she just—stopped?" he inquired.

"Stopped? I don't quite get you, Mr. Grendon. There's no harbor anywhere near."

"Tell me how this listening business of yours works."

"Well, in non-technical language, we detect the presence of a submarine by listening, with rather delicate apparatus, for the impulses transmitted through the water by her engines."

"And if they stop?"

"We hear nothing, of course. But you see, there's always machinery working on a submarine. When she's submerged, the electrical side takes over. Even if she's resting on the bottom, the compressed air apparatus is working. When she's on the surface, her ordinary engines are used. And if they're not being used to move her, the opportunity is taken to charge up her batteries. About the only time a submarine is entirely silent is when she's in dock."

"That's just exactly what I had in my own mind," said Paul.

"But I tell you there's nowhere she could dock," Farley leaned over the chart again. "Of course, there are lots of little inlets about. Any one of them might be made deep enough. But surely these criminals of yours wouldn't leave the boat where anyone could see it?"

"They're not to leave it somewhere, haven't they? They can't spend all their time on board. I suppose they could sink it in one of these inlets? And send down a couple of men in diving kit to bring it up when required? That would solve the mystery of the silent engines, wouldn't it?"

"By Jove, I never thought of that! Yes, it would be possible."

"Got a large scale ordnance survey of that coast?"

"I'll have one up in a minute," said Farley, pressing a bell.

While the messenger was fetching the map, Paul puffed restlessly at his cigarette.

"Here's the idea," he explained, pressing the stub in a tray. "It's a shot in the dark, but it may work. It doesn't seem reasonable to me that The Owl and his men will spend more time on that submarine than necessary. Nor does it seem reasonable that they'll sink her at any great distance from where they're living. They'll want to keep in touch with her. In other words, I'm expecting The Owl to have land quarters very near the sea. Most of that coast is sparsely inhabited. If we can find an inlet with a moderately large house near to it, I'm thinking that house will repay investigation."

"By crimes, Paul!" cried Dransfield with unwonted excitement. "I believe you've got it!"

THE ordnance map arrived. On it, Captain Farley carefully marked the approximate position of the submarine when last heard. The others bent over the map on the desk eagerly. And everyone uttered an exclamation of profound delight as they saw where Farley's pencil pointed.

There were several inlets within easy reach of the indicated spot. There were a few isolated cottages scattered here and there. But there was only one large house anywhere in the vicinity, and this was at the head of the inlet nearest to the pencil.

"Looks as though you've hit the nail on the head, Mr. Grendon," said Farley. He was as excited as anyone else. "Smart bit of work, too. What do you do next? Raid this house?"

"I'm afraid we aren't to do that, dare we, Jim?"

Dransfield shook his head. "It's not so easy as all that, unfortunately. We'll have to plan some."

"There's only one thing so far as I can see," Paul looked at the map again. "Mr. Downes and I assume a slight disguise and go to spy out the land." He turned to Henry. "What do you say, old chap?"

"I say yes!" replied Henry eagerly. "But—we'd better hurry, hadn't we?"

THOUGH there was no certainty about Paul's deduction it did seem to show a real hole in the deadlock. Moreover it offered an opportunity for action which was more than welcome.

"There's no doubt that this Eldon Grange must be investigated," said Dransfield, one broad forefinger blotting out the house on the map. "But I'm not at all sure that I oughtn't to set about the job officially."

"That's for you to decide, of course, Jim," said Paul with disarming modesty. "But it's got to be done without the inmates suspecting it. You're rather handicapped by red tape, aren't you? I fancy my freedom from regulations might be an advantage."

"Yes, I suppose you're right. Any plans?"

"No. We'll have to take things as we find them, and be ready for any emergency that crops up."

"It's a dangerous job, Paul. How do you propose to keep in touch with me?"

"We can't do that." Paul shook his head slowly. "If we find that Eldon Grange really is The Owl's headquarters, we shall have to rescue Miss Porter without any help from you."

"But—"

"I know. It's a pretty desperate business. But we're up against one hard fact: At the first suspicion that we've located him, The Owl will make away with the girl. Can you suggest any other course of action?"

Dransfield pulled at his moustache. "No," he admitted. "I can't. But I wish I could keep tag on you."

"I'll phone you at once as soon as we learn anything. It may be, of course, we shall find that we need your help. If you don't hear anything by tonight you'll know that we're on the right track."

SEVERAL hours later, two very ragged and disreputable tramps emerged from the bushes alongside the main road and plodded their way toward Fairbridge. Concealed in the tattered garments of each, however, was a tiny pin-fire revolver, deadly at close range, and several high explosive bombs about the size of a golf ball; also a pair of headphones, wire, and a little square black box with a hook on one side of it.

Just before reaching the village a footpath led off through the fields.

"This is our way," said Paul Grendon, climbing the stile. "Joins up with the only road to Eldon Grange."

Henry's heart was beating fast as they tramped through the fields. The one eye he could use searched eagerly in the direction of Eldon Grange, but as yet he could not see it.

They came eventually to the road, narrow, rough, little more than a cart track. Trees and bushes still hid any sign of the house. But Paul's eyes sparkled in his scarred grimy face as he noted the poles carrying the double telephone wires.

"That's our first job, I think," he said, looking round for a suitable place. "Tap the wires and listen in."

At the next curve of the road, the wires took a short cut through a copse, cutting off the corner. Paul vaulted the low fence round the copse and pushed his way into the thick undergrowth with Henry close at his heels. Choosing a convenient tree, he climbed it and attached the apparatus he had brought to the wires. Then he descended, and handed the headphones to Henry.

"I know you'll be disappointed," he said, "but one of us ought to stay here and listen whilst the other goes forward. And perhaps I've a little more experience of this kind of thing than you have."

"I'm not disappointed," lied Henry.

"That's the spirit! Your job may turn out to be more important than mine. You're quite hidden from the road here. Make yourself as comfortable as you can."

"You—you'll not be long?"

"Can't promise that, can I? I'll be as quick as I can—with safety. Maybe I'll find that we're on a wild-goose chase, in which case I shall be back pretty soon. But if I can verify the fact that this house is The Owl's headquarters—well, there's no telling what may happen."

Paul hesitated a moment.

"There's just this about it," he went on. "If I'm not back before dark you'll know two things. You'll know that we're on the right track, and you'll also know that they've got me."

"And what shall I do then?" asked Henry.

"I think the only thing will be to get Dransfield here as

The House of Sleep

quickly as possible and raid the place. I shall be dead. So will Miss Porter and her uncle. But you may get some of The Owl's men."

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN Paul had gone, Henry put on the headphones and sat down to wait. He realized that his job was a very necessary one, but he wished that he had been able to go forward, to keep going, to keep doing something, whatever it might be. It was horrible to sit here, feeling that Aileen was so near, yet making no definite progress toward reaching her. There was so little time, and so many difficulties to be overcome.

Paul's last words had brought home to him the full danger of the situation—assuming that Eldon Grange proved to be The Owl's headquarters. There was no doubt that if they were caught prowling around it would mean death, not only to themselves but to Aileen. The Owl or Smith—whichever was in charge—would take no risks. A single false step would lead to terrible disaster.

Perhaps it was as well that Paul Greendon had gone on alone. After all, this kind of thing was his profession, and he could be relied upon not to make any foolish mistakes. He knew the danger and would take every precaution...

The afternoon dragged slowly on. The hot sunshine made Henry drowsy. The song of the birds and the occasional lowing of distant cattle were the only sounds in the peaceful sleepy countryside. He began to feel that it was impossible for a nest of criminals to be so near.

Then the phones buzzed, startling him. Exchange replied, and an unfamiliar male voice asked for a local number. This turned out to be a coal merchant. The first speaker asked for a load of coal to be delivered at Eldon Grange tomorrow without fail. The coal merchant thanked Major Castick for his order, promising to deliver it.

Nothing very helpful about this. Henry hoped that Paul was having better luck. As the sun sank lower in the west he grew more anxious. Suppose they were on the wrong track after all. Suppose they were wasting precious time on an entirely harmless household. What could they do if it turned out that Major Castick was quite innocent?

The phones buzzed again. This time it was an incoming call, and Henry's heart missed a beat when he heard that it originated from London.

"That you, Major?" asked London. Henry didn't recognize the voice. "Is Mr. Smith still with you?"

"Sure," replied the man who had ordered the coals. "Do you want to speak to him?"

"If you please."

There was a short delay. Henry sat rigid. Mr. Smith! Surely this could not be a coincidence...

"Hello, Smith speaking," said a voice at last; and its cold velvety quality could not be mistaken. "Who's that?"

"Feathered wisdom," said London. "Did the stout arrive in satisfactory condition?"

"It arrived undamaged; but I haven't had an opportunity of sampling it yet."

"I'd like to have your opinion as soon as possible. I imagine our competitors have something up their sleeves. I haven't been able to get in touch with either Mr. Dawn or Mr. Draper this morning. It almost seems as though they've been deliberately avoiding me."

"Perhaps they'll be calling to see me."

"I don't think that's at all likely," London laughed shortly. "They don't even know of your existence—unless, of course, one of the firm has told them. That hardly seems possible. Still, you might as well be prepared. You'll know what to say to them if they do call!"

"I should ask them to wait until you arrive."

"That's right. Now please let me have your report on the stout by tomorrow morning. Give me a ring at ten-thirty. I shall be at City 0462."

"City 0462. All right. I'll ring at ten-thirty precisely. Anything more?"

"Not just now, I think. Good-bye."

The line went dead. Henry sat staring straight ahead. There was no doubt about the matter now. This conversation, guarded for the benefit of any operator who might chance to be listening, had been quite clear to him. The stout, obviously, was Robert Porter, who must have been brought straight here when he was kidnapped. So far, Smith had not been able to make him talk, and The Owl was growing impatient. The Owl, too, was wondering what had become of Paul and Henry, and was warning Smith to be careful.

They were on the right track! God, what a relief it was to be sure about that! Surely now, they would be able to devise some way of rescuing Aileen and her uncle.

Deep in his thoughts Henry did not hear someone approaching through the undergrowth. He started when Paul Greendon suddenly appeared at his side.

"We're right," Mr. Greendon said, as he cried, jumping to his feet. "The Owl has just been talking to Smith."

Paul nodded. "Yes, we're right," he said slowly. "But tell me about it."

Henry repeated the conversation. As he came to the end he realized that his companion was unusually grave.

"What's the matter?" he asked in quick anxiety. "Is—is anything wrong?"

Paul threw himself on the grass and lit a cigarette. "There's no more wrong than there was before," he replied. "It's just that—well, I can't see how the deuce we're ever going to get into that house."

"Have you—seen anyone?"

"No. But I knew straight away that we'd got to the right spot. In the first place, there's a sort of watch-tower at the top of the house. It's really an old chimney, covered with ivy, and looks quite harmless. I happened to see the sun glint on the watcher's glasses, or I should never have suspected that anyone was hidden amongst the ivy. When I used my own glasses I could just distinguish him, keeping a constant watch on the road. It comes under observation immediately round that next bend. Luckily I was making my way through the trees when I saw the flash of reflected light. Otherwise I should have been seen. I managed to advance a little by dodging behind hedges, but I don't dare go too near. I saw enough to realize that we're up against a big proposition."

"But we must get in!" muttered Henry fiercely. "Now that we know Aileen—"

"We don't want to sign her death warrant, old chappie. I'll tell you the situation, and perhaps some brainwave will be forthcoming. There's nothing very unusual about the house itself, except that one or two windows are closely shuttered, with the outside of the shutters painted to represent windows. Miss Porter's somewhere behind those shutters or I'm a Dutchman."

"The garden round the house, and three or four Alsatian dogs run loose in it. Surrounding the garden is a high wall which continues right down to the shore of the inlet. I don't mind betting that wall is fitted with a very efficient burglar alarm. There are two gates in it, one at the front of the house, the other at the back, and both are under the direct observation of the Johnny in the watch tower. Now how are we going to elude watchers, alarm and Alsatisans?"

"Heaven knows!" said Henry glumly. "There doesn't seem much—What about when it's dark?"

"THERE'LL still be the dogs and the alarm," Paul rose to his feet. "We'll scout round again, of course, but it doesn't seem very promising to me. In the meantime, I think I'd better get to a phone and tell Inspector Dransfield all about it. He might be able to suggest something."

"I say!" Henry had a brainwave. "He'll be able to find whose number City 0462 is, won't he?"

"Yes."

"Then he'll be able to tell The Owl is to be at ten-thirty tomorrow?"

"He'll be able to catch him."

"I don't think so," Paul shook his head. "I don't think I shall tell him about that."

"But—"

"I suppose it's my duty, really. But listen—and tell me what you think. Suppose they do lay a trap for The Owl. They catch him—what then?"

"We might be able to arrange an exchange—The Owl for Aileen and her uncle."

"We might, perhaps. But Jim couldn't—even if he would. He doesn't even consider such a thing. He'd have to put The Owl safe behind bars at once. Would that help us so far as Miss Porter and her uncle are concerned? Obviously not. Smith would soon find out; I can't see him letting his prisoners escape after that. We should be in *statu quo* that night."

"I—I think so."

"Now suppose The Owl managed to escape from the trap. He would know that there was a leak in his organization somewhere. For safety's sake he would probably throw up the whole business, phone Smith to kill the prisoners, and meet him somewhere with the submarine. That's not much use to us, is it?"

The House of Sleep

"My God, no!"

On the other hand, so long as no suspicions are aroused we may obtain valuable information by listening in. If I tell Jim about City 0462, he'll feel it his duty to act on it at once. What do you think I ought to do?"

"Keep silent," said Henry with prompt decision. "I hadn't quite realized—"

"I'm glad you agree with me," Paul smiled and crushed out his cigarette. "I hate deceiving Jim, but it seems the only way. Now I must get off. I shall be some time away because I'm going into Ipswich."

"Ipswich?"

"Yes. I don't want to phone from any place where I might be conspicuous. And I want to get some ponies for those dogs—just in case. I'll have to recover my clothes, then try to find some kind of conveyance from Fairbridge. It will be three or four hours before I'm back, and it's no use you coming with me. Will you stay here and bang on those headphones?"

"There's nothing else I can do, is there?"

"Not yet. You won't stir away from here?"

"No. Be as quick as you can."

Sure but we can't risk another look round until Smith and Co. have settled for the night."

Paul crept away through the shrubbery. Henry adjusted the headphones and sat down again.

The remainder of the afternoon passed slowly. The sun sank, and dusk crept over the countryside. No message of any sort came during the wait.

During the long wait, Henry's mind was tortured with thoughts of what might be happening in Eldon Grange. He couldn't forget what methods Smith had used before to try to persuade Robert Porter to talk. Perhaps at this very moment similar methods were being used...

And the situation seemed so desperate, so hopeless. They knew where Aileen was, but they couldn't get to her. Even if, somehow, they managed to elude the guards and penetrate unnoticed into the house—what then?

There would be many men about the place, armed criminals who would fight to the last. It was fantastic to hope that he and Paul could storm the house alone and carry off the two prisoners unharmed.

The stars came out, and dark night descended. Eventually Paul Grendon returned, carrying a large parcel with him.

"I've had a word with Jim," he announced. "He can't suggest anything except a raid. And that's no use to us at present. I've got some poisoned meat here. And I've rounded up a bit of grub for ourselves. We mustn't get it mixed. I've been thinking as I came along—if the worst comes to worst, we'll have to blast our way into the house with those bombs and risk what happens to Miss Porter."

Henry thrilled a little. Paul Grendon, at any rate, had not abandoned all hope.

"Are we—going now?" he asked.

"There've been no more calls through?"

"No."

"We'll get along, then. I've got a glimmering of an idea. Luckily there's no moon. Come on! Let's see what we can do."

CHAPTER XXIII

AFTER sharing out the poisoned meat and the high-explosive bombs, they crept through the copse towards the road. The night was dark and still. Hardly a breath of wind was stirring among the trees. The silence of the sleeping countryside seemed almost oppressive. Only the faintest of murmurs came from the sea.

"Sound will travel a long way on a night like this," whispered Paul. "We'll have to be careful. Got your gun handy?"

"Yes," replied Henry, feeling at the cold butt of the revolver in his pocket.

"We'll keep off the road, I think. We don't want to run into anybody."

As they slowly advanced toward the house, dodging from hedge to hedge, Paul explained his plan.

"I'm frightened of that wall," he confessed. "I feel so sure that it will be connected up with some kind of alarm."

"Can't such things be put out of action?" asked Henry.

"Sure—if we knew where to find it. But in finding it we're so damned likely to set it off. I want to keep well away from the wall, if possible."

"But how can you—"

Henry broke off. Clearly through the silence of the night had come the sound of a door closing.

They stood motionless, listening to the tumultuous barking of the unseen dogs. Soon they heard a sliding door being opened; and a moment later a light sprang up in a garage, disclosing three men gathered round a car.

The car was facing toward the inlet.

"Down in this hollow!" murmured Paul urgently. "If they put the headlights on—"

Henry dropped into the small sandy hollow, and lay full length beside Paul. They heard the car start up. Then a bright light flooded the shore around them. They were only just in time.

Thankful for the shelter of the shallow ridge in front, they listened. The car came down the drive toward the gate near the inlet, with the dogs clamoring round it. As it turned at the bottom, the headlights swung away from the shore.

IN darkness again, Paul and Henry peered over the ridge. The car had stopped while the gates were being opened. It was no more than fifty yards away from them. In the stillness of the night they could hear the gentle purr of its engine, the creaking of the gate as it swung open.

Then a familiar voice spoke, the cold emotionless voice of Mr. Smith.

"Keep running round, and keep your eyes open. It's not a bit likely that Grendon and his pal are within a hundred miles of here, but we can't afford to take a risk at this stage."

"And if I see 'em?" asked the driver, "do I bump 'em off?"

"You do not! You turn the car toward the house, switch off your headlights three times, then get back as quick as you can. Jerry will be watching from the tower, and he'll see your signal. We shall know what to do. If you still see anything in a couple of hours, come back."

"Okay."

The car passed through the gateway and moved slowly along the narrow road, its headlights swinging from side to side with the curves. In the darkness behind it, the gate clanged shut. Then Smith spoke again.

The dogs know you better than anyone else, Pete. You'd better stick around in the garden with them. Give a short ring on the alarm every half hour so long as everything's okay."

"God, what a blasted game!" grumbled a third voice. "When you know damned well—"

"We don't know!" snarled Smith. "We're taking elementary precautions. And if you don't like—"

"Oh, all right! How long does this go on?"

"You'll have a four-hour spell. Then I'll send someone out to relieve you."

The barking of the dogs broke out again as Smith moved away. Pete cursed them into silence. The distant door closed again. Soon all was quiet as it had been before the car had left.

For quite a while Paul lay motionless, watching the beams thrown into the sky by the headlights of the car as it slowly twisted and turned through the narrow country lanes.

"That seems to have torn it completely, old chappie," he whispered at last.

"Yes," agreed Henry reluctantly. "They're not going to bed tonight. With a guard accompanying the dogs in the garden, we haven't the ghost of a chance of getting into the house unseen. We might as well retire."

In silence they made their way back to the copse, using the same devious route to avoid the searching car. Once among the thick undergrowth they were safe from its prying headlights.

Henry slumped down on the bracken, miserable, despairing.

"Whatever are we going to do now?" he muttered desolately.

"Heaven knows!" replied Paul. He took a cigarette from his case, then replaced it. "One thing is certain—we can't do anything tonight. But there's another day tomorrow, you know."

"You said it was quite impossible to approach anywhere near the house in daylight."

"So it is. At the moment I haven't the first glimmerings of a plan. Let's try to get a little sleep. Perhaps Smith's phone message in the morning will give us an idea. Shall I take the first four hours, or will you?"

"You go to sleep," said Henry. "I couldn't."

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER XXIV

THE morning broke clear and cloudless, awakening Henry from a deep sleep. In spite of his protests, Paul had made him lie down when his watch was over; and much to his surprise he had fallen asleep almost at once. As he rose to his feet stretching, he felt refreshed, he felt more hopeful—and he felt hungry. In his package Paul had brought a bottle of milk, a loaf of bread, and some cheese. They breakfasted frugally. "I think we'd better lie doggo just at present," said Paul, lighting a cigarette. "Any suspicions they may have had at Eldon Grange should be dispelled by now, and it's no use risking being seen. Perhaps that phone message will give us a tip."

It was a dreary business waiting for ten-thirty. But punctually at the time arranged, there was a buzz in the headphones and Smith's voice asked for City 0462. There was a slight delay in getting the connection through. Then they heard The Owl reply.

"That stout's not up to much," said Smith at once. "The report is rather too long to give you in full, but you can take it from me it won't be any use to us." "I'm sorry to hear that. You've seen nothing of our friends, Dawn and Draper?"

"No. Haven't you got in touch with them?" "Not one of our firm has caught a glimpse of them since yesterday morning."

"I've been half expecting that they might turn up here, but that's hardly likely now, I think."

"I'm just a bit anxious about them," confessed The Owl. "It's queer that they should disappear when we're so near the end of the deal. There's nothing doing as regards candles, either."

"Looks as though the deal will fall through, doesn't it?" "Afraid it does. If so, we shan't have any use for either stout or lean. You can expect me tomorrow morning. You needn't ring again unless something turns up."

"Okay."

Both Paul and Henry had been listening in to the conversation. Henry swore forcibly as he reversed one of the earpieces and relinquished the phones to Paul.

"That doesn't get us much further," he muttered.

"It doesn't, old chappie. But there's a certain comfort in the knowledge that The Owl has not got the bonds."

"Oh, damn the bonds! I'm thinking of Aileen. We must do something."

"Short of blasting our way in with the bombs I don't see—"

Paul stopped. "There's another call coming through." He listened intently, then relaxed with a shrug. "It's only an order for the butcher."

"By Jove!" Henry sprang to his feet. "I wonder—"

"Got an idea?" "I don't know. It's just occurred to me that they ordered a load of coal yesterday afternoon. I'd forgotten all about it. I'm wondering if—"

"A load of coal? To be delivered today?"

"Yes. Couldn't we—"

"I get you!" Paul flung down the phones and jumped up. "It's a great idea, old chappie. We'll risk it. They haven't been delivered yet. Let's get further back along the road. Wait a minute. We may want some rope."

Fumbling in the package, he produced a length of strong thin cord.

"Come on! It's a real brainwave from Brixton this time! But there's no time to lose."

Henry had never seen his companion so excited before. They climbed the fence around the copse and reached the road.

"If you hear any sort of car coming, just dash for the hedge," said Paul. "It's no use both of us being seen if Smith happens to see out his Flying Squad again."

They walked rapidly along the road away from Eldon Grange. At a point about a mile from the copse, Paul halted. They were in the middle of an S-bend.

"This seems quite a suitable spot," he murmured. "We can't be seen from any distance away. Let's hide behind that hedge."

Crouching behind the hedge, they waited. Almost immediately they heard the rumble of a lorry approaching.

"Only just in time," whispered Paul. "By jiminy! Suppose we'd been too late! Leave it to me."

He advanced into the road. A small lorry lumbered around the bend. Henry's heart jumped when he saw that it was full of coal. Paul stepped forward and held up his hand.

The driver pulled up. He was a young man with pleas-

ant smiling features almost hidden by coal dust. "Ere!" he said, surveying the disreputable figure.

"Wot's the big idea?" "Gotta match, mate!"

"Well, I'll be—"

Words failed the driver, but he fumbled in his pocket. "O'if all the—Ere y'are!"

Paul looked at him closely as he took the match. "Any use for a pound note, my man?" he asked abruptly.

"Garn, you're yer kiddin'!" The driver's hand went to his gear lever. "I ain't no time to—"

"Wait a minute!" From somewhere in the ragged folds of his coat, Paul produced a pound note, and his identification warrant as a special constable. "Take a look at these."

The driver's eyes goggled. "Gosh!" he muttered. "What the 'ell's up?"

"Are ye delivering this coal at Eldon Grange?" "Yessir."

"Well, we will take it for you."

"But—"

"Listen, my man!" There was stern command in Paul's voice. "For reasons which I have not time to give you, it is necessary for us to deliver this coal at Eldon Grange."

A revolver suddenly appeared in his hands. "You have seen my authority. You can take it quietly or not. But if you obstruct the law—"

"O'ri right, gunvor," said the driver staring at the gun, "I ain't goin' to—"

"This pound note is yours now. I'm going to fasten you up and leave you here till we get back. There will be another note for you then, and a third tomorrow afternoon, provided you haven't breathed a word about this to anyone."

Paul beckoned to Henry and urged the man toward the hedge.

"Better come behind here," he said. "We want to borrow your clothes as well."

The driver seemed completely resigned to the situation. In a very few minutes he had exchanged his grimy coat and trousers for Henry's rags. They fastened him up securely with the cord and thrust an improvised gag into his mouth.

"Sorry to have to do this," said Paul. "But we can't take a risk. It won't be for long—if we have any luck at all."

As they returned to the road Henry clutched Paul's sleeve.

"Do you think it will work?" he gasped excitedly. "Are we going to use the bombs as soon as we get into the yard? Have we to shoot first and ask questions afterwards?"

"Steady, old chappie! We're getting far too blood-thirsty. I think we'd better try a quieter way than that. Let me tell you my idea."

PAUL climbed into the lorry and heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that it contained some old sacking.

"The coal-grate is usually near a wall of the house, isn't it?" he continued. "Now suppose I'm lying on this coal, hidden by the sacking. There's a good chance that no one will be particularly interested in your operations. If you can back the lorry near to the wall and tip it, I ought to be able to slip down the grate without being seen. What do you think?"

Henry stared. "Do you mean that I—"

"I mean that you'll have to do your damndest to arrange things for me. If we fail of course, we'll have to fight. But if the plan works—well, I shall be inside the house. You'll have to come away and listen in on the phones in case I can get a message through to you."

"I thought I was going to—"

"I know, old chappie! But don't you agree that my idea seems likely to give the best results?"

"I suppose so." Henry swallowed hard. He was disappointed, but—"Yes, it's the best way."

"Good man!" Paul patted him on the shoulder. "Cover me up with the sacking. Then—straight for Eldon Grange!"

He climbed into the lorry and lay down in the coal. After smearing his hands and face with coal dust, Henry arranged the sacking so that his passenger was quite hidden.

"G-good luck!" he said brokenly.

He had never driven a lorry before, but he soon became used to the gears. As he twisted and turned along the road, his pace increased with his confidence. In a few minutes he rounded the corner by the copse and came in sight of Eldon Grange.

His heart was throbbing unmercifully as he drew nearer to the house. They were risking everything on this last

The House of Sleep

venture. If it failed—he dare not think of the consequences.

He could see no one about, but he knew that he was under observation. When the road branched, he drove toward the rear of the house.

As he approached the gate it opened. He steered the lorry into the large yard beyond. A quick glance round showed him the location of the coal-grate. A little thrill of exultation ran through him when he saw that it was in a corner, in the angle of two walls. Without hesitation, he swung the steering wheel over and backed the lorry into the corner.

As he climbed down from the driver's seat, the man who had opened the gate for him lounged across the yard. "Passed anyone on the road, brother?" he asked.

"No," said Henry, pulling a delivery note from his pocket. "Lonely as 'ell! Sign this, please."

The man fumbled in his pocket. Henry went to the back of the lorry and removed the grate. Then he turned the tilting apparatus, and part of the coal snot noisily down.

The man handed him the signed delivery note and sauntered away. Henry seized his shovel and turned to the back of the lorry again. There was a wriggling movement under the sacking, and Paul's face appeared.

"All clear?" he whispered.

"Yes."

Henry quickly shoveled down the coal which was piled round the opening. A second later Paul had slipped through feet first. After giving him time to move away, Henry continued his job.

It was done! Paul was inside the house!

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN Paul Grendon dropped blindly into the cellar at Eldon Grange he twisted his ankle on the heap of coal below the grate. It was not a bad sprain, but sufficient to turn him sick for a moment.

For quite a long time he sat in the darkness rubbing his injured feet and listening. Vague sounds came from above his head, but he felt sure that there was no one about in the cellars. He had no plans. He would have to seize any opportunity that offered itself. The first thing, obviously, was to familiarize himself as far as possible with the geography of the house.

He rose to his feet eventually and padded softly through the cellars. There was nothing to interest him here. He limped cautiously to the end of the passage and found himself at the foot of a flight of stone steps.

As soon as he reached these, he could hear an indistinct murmur of voices quite near at hand. It seemed clear that the steps led up to the kitchen of the house, and that at least two or three men were in the kitchen.

No use going up at present. He sat at the bottom of the steps, ready to dart away at a moment's notice. The murmur of voices continued, and he guessed from various sounds which accompanied it that the men were engaged in preparing a meal. He would have to wait until the coast was clear.

He returned to his first hiding-place and sat down.

Hours dragged wearily past in irksome waiting. Paul made frequent expeditions to the foot of the stairs, but the kitchen was never empty. On several occasions someone came down to the cellars and he had to crouch behind the packing-cases, holding his breath, ready for desperate action if discovered.

He could not even make any plans. Remembering what he had seen from the outside, he tried to visualize the internal structure of the house, with special reference to the rooms whose windows were guarded by painted shutters. He felt that he could make his way straight to these rooms. But he did not know what conditions he would find upstairs.

As afternoon merged into evening, he began to grow more anxious. His entry into the house would not do much good if he could get no further than these cellars. And the kitchen seemed to be used as a living-room.

Nine o'clock! Desperate fancies were flitting through Paul's mind now. Would it be possible to hold up the occupants of the kitchen at the point of a revolver? To overcome them, blind and gag them without raising the alarm? He knew it wouldn't. But it would have to be tried unless—

And then, when he had almost decided on this last resource, the opportunity came. Listening once more at the foot of the stairs, he could hardly believe that something had not gone wrong with his hearing. No sound came to his

straining ears. So far as he could tell, the kitchen was empty.

He must take the chance while it was offered. Creeping cautiously up the stone steps, he reached the door at the top. He pressed his ear to this for a few moments. Then, silently turning the knob, he opened the door an inch.

The kitchen beyond was in darkness. Paul gently pushed the door further open and slid through. There was always the possibility of a trap. But he would have to risk this.

For several minutes he stood motionless, revolver ready. Nothing stirred. He could hear a rumble of voices in some distant part of the house. With hands outstretched he groped his way through the blackness toward the front of the house.

There was a short passage with a door separating the kitchen from the hall. Paul cautiously opened the door a trifle, then quickly closed it and stood hesitating. A lamp was burning in the hall. To his eyes, grown accustomed to the darkness, its light seemed very brilliant. If anyone should surprise him now, he would have no chance to hide.

But this risk, too, would have to be taken. He opened the door again and passed through.

The hall was large, and comfortably furnished. Paul noted with delight that he was standing almost at the foot of the broad staircase. He limped up the stairs without delay, treading on the edge of each to avoid creaks. In the dark corridor at the top he paused to get his bearings. So far luck had been with him. He must not throw away the opportunity by any foolish action.

Having decided where the rooms with the shuttered windows must be, he crept along the uncarpeted corridor like a gray ghost. Outside one of the bedrooms he halted. If his judgment was correct, this must be his destination.

A faint streak of light showed at the bottom of the door. A tiny ray, too, came through the keyhole. And when Paul stooped to apply his eye to this, a little thrill of exultation ran through him. The key was in the lock—and it was on the outside!

Obviously someone was imprisoned in this room. Silently he unlocked the door. With infinite caution he turned the knob and gently pushed it open.

Through the crack he could see a bed. He could see Aileen Porter lying on it, fully dressed, staring up at the ceiling. Stiffing a sigh of relief, he opened the door a little further, slipped through, and closed it noiselessly behind him.

"Hello, little lady!" he said.

The girl started violently. She turned and looked at him in fear, her wide eyes taking in every detail of his filthy clothes and the repulsive scar across his face.

"Who—are you?" she breathed.

"Don't make a sound, please. I just called to see if you would like a vacuum cleaner."

"Mr. Knight!" Aileen jumped from the bed. "Surely—it can't be—"

"How did you guess?" asked Paul with a cheerful grin. The next moment the girl was in his arms, sobbing on his ragged shoulder.

"Oh, I thought—I thought no one would ever—"

"Of course you did." He patted the back of her head soothingly. "But, listen, Miss Porter. We're not out of the woods yet. You must try to pull yourself together and—"

"I will!" The girl's sobbing ceased abruptly. "Where's Henry? Is he—all right?"

Paul explained briefly.

"Your uncle's somewhere in the house," he continued. "Haven't you seen him?"

"No."

"I MUST try to locate him. Probably he'll be in the next room. Look here, Miss Porter. What about your gaoles? Do they keep bobbing in any old time of the day or—"

"They took my dinner away an hour ago. They're not a bit likely to come in again till morning."

"Then I'll see if I can find your uncle straight away."

Paul opened the door and looked out into the dark corridor. He could see no one about. He crept silently to the door of the next bedroom.

Here again, the key was on the outside. He unlocked the door and entered.

Robert Porter lay stretched on the bed. He was still in the pyjamas which he had been wearing at Duke Street. His bruised and bleeding face bore evidence of the brutal treatment he had suffered. He was obviously ill; so ill that he paid no attention to his visitor.

"You've been having a rough time, old chappie," mur-

The House of Sleep

mured Paul. "I'm going to try to help you. Don't make a noise, please. Can you manage to walk?"

"No. You've done enough. Kill me if you—"

"I'm a friend, Mr. Porter. I'm going to take you to Aileen."

"Aileen! Where is she?"

"In the next room. Come on! See what you can do."

Aided by Paul's strong arm, Porter managed to rise and slowly make his way to Aileen's room. Here he collapsed on the bed, hardly conscious of the girl's caresses.

Paul slipped back, closed and locked the door of his room, then returned. He stood for a moment looking down on the sick man. This was an unforeseen complication. It was clearly hopeless to think of escaping from the house and taking Robert Porter along.

He looked up to find Aileen's troubled eyes fixed on him. "I know what you're thinking," she said softly. "I—I can't leave him."

"Of course you can't! Paul's voice was cheery. "In any case, I don't think there'd be the slightest chance of getting away unnoticed. I guess these shutters are fastened on the outside. And there are dogs in the garden."

"Then why did you come?" cried Aileen. "Why did you put yourself into such danger?"

"You're forgetting our friend from Brixton," said Paul.

"If I can get word through to him, he'll bring the police. Then I think we should be able to barricade ourselves in this room and hold the fort until help comes."

"But how can you—"

"There's a telephone somewhere in the house. I'm going to find it." Paul took a small revolver from one of his pockets and handed it to the girl. "You'd better lock the door behind me. If I get back I'll knock three times. If I don't—well, you ought to be able to keep anyone out with that."

Opening the door again he transferred the key to the inside. Aileen watched him breathlessly.

"You'll be careful," she gasped.

"Sure!" grinned Paul. "That's my job."

He closed the door behind him and limped back along the dark corridor. Probably the telephone would be somewhere in the hall. He would have to go down.

Fully realizing that discovery now meant death to them all, he crept slowly down the stairs testing each one before putting his weight on it. The murmur of voices still came from behind one of the doors opening off the hall.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and looked eagerly around.

In a moment he saw the telephone. It stood on a small table just outside that dangerous door.

Pulling his own revolver from his ragged clothes, Paul stole across the hall, the gun ready for instant action.

He reached the telephone and lifted the receiver.

"Are you there, old chappie?" he whispered tensely.

"Are you there? Get Dransfield as quickly as possible. Are you there? Are you—"

The door beside him opened suddenly, and a man appeared. He saw Paul at once and shouted. Paul's revolver spat. The man staggered back.

Turning swiftly, Paul ran up the stairs, as more men came tumbling into the hall. He limped along the corridor and knocked on the bedroom door. It was opened at once. He had just time to lock it again before his pursuers arrived.

"Quick! Help me with this!" he said, grasping one end of the large wardrobe.

"Did you—do it?" gasped Aileen as they dragged the wardrobe against the door.

"I don't know," said Paul. "I got a message though. Whether it was heard—"

The door was shaking under the vigorous onslaught of several shoulders. A crash came from the next room. Suddenly all the noise stopped, and Smith's voice was heard, cold and velvet as always.

"Hello, you inside!" it said.

"Hello yourself!" said Paul. A conversation now would suit him better than action. Every moment of delay might be valuable. "What do you want?"

"What on earth do you think you're doing?" asked Smith. "Just settling down for the night, old chappie."

"Oh, it's you, Grendon, is it? I wondered if it might be as soon as I saw that you'd got Porter in with you. Don't overlook much, do you?"

"Not if I can help it."

"How did you get into the house?"

"You don't expect me to tell you that, do you?"

"Perhaps not." Smith's voice was very silky. "But you're in a bit of a hole now, aren't you?"

"On the contrary, it's a very comfortable room."

"Rather absurd of you to think that you can prevent us from breaking this door down."

"Perhaps not quite so absurd as you think," laughed Paul. "I've got a very excellent bomb here—three, in fact. And after I've shot everybody I can, I'll throw—"

"I see," said Smith slowly. "Perhaps that does require thinking about."

In point of fact Mr. Smith was rather worried. He didn't think he was being bluff. The situation might be quite good—or very much the reverse. All depended on whether Paul Grendon had managed to get his phone message through.

It would be easy to discover this. Smith hurried down into the hall and went to the telephone.

The receiver lay where Paul had dropped it. He listened. The line was dead. He rang Exchange.

"Can I have that number again, please?" he asked.

"Which number?" growled Exchange, annoyed at being disturbed.

"The one I've just been connected to."

"Mistake somewhere. No call has come through on this line, sir. What number is it you want?"

"I'm sorry," Smith smiled evilly. "The mistake is mine. London—City 0462, please."

While waiting for the connection to be made, he turned to one of his men.

"We were just in time evidently," he chuckled. "Grendon didn't get through. But in all probability, Downes is somewhere around, waiting for him. If he doesn't turn up within a certain time, Downes will phone the police himself. You'd better get out the car, run straight along to the main Ipswich road and cut every telephone wire there is. Then come back and search for Downes. Understand?"

"Sure!"

"And don't waste any time."

Exchange announced that the call was through and a moment later Smith was talking to The Owl.

"Mr. Dawn has called. Dropped in quite unexpectedly. I've persuaded him to stay until you come."

"Splendid!" There was a momentary hesitation in The Owl's voice. "Has he communicated with his firm?"

"I'm quite sure he hasn't. He was going to telephone, but he—he changed his mind."

"I see. I'll come down straight away. I think you'd better arrange for the shipping facilities—just in case."

"I'll attend to that at once." Smith hung up the receiver, and stood for a moment gazing at his men with narrowed eyes. "The Owl is coming," he said tersely.

"Pete and Jerry! Get the submarine up. The rest of you scout round and find plenty of straw and brown paper. We'll smoke those rats upstairs out of their hole."

CHAPTER XXVI

WITH Paul Grendon's appeal ringing in his ears, Henry Downes stumbled from the copse.

Get Dransfield! What good was that? The shout and the revolver shot were clear indications that Paul had been caught. Get Dransfield! It was now far too late for the police to help. But—it was the only thing to do.

Groaning in his haste, he crashed through the blackness, scratching himself with thorns, stumbling over projecting roots. He could not see his way; and this was no time for caution. He had the nightmare thought that he never would escape from the clinging undergrowth. But eventually he reached the road.

He stood for a moment listening. No sound came from the direction of Eldon Grange. Apparently the whole world still slept undisturbed.

The nearest phone would be at Fairbridge. The quickest way to Fairbridge was by the footpath through the fields. After a last frenzied glance toward the hidden house, Henry ran swiftly down the road toward the stile.

Almost immediately he saw a beam in the sky, moving slowly across. Realizing that it came from the headlights of a car, he dived for the hedge.

He was only just in time. The car swept rapidly past. He couldn't see the occupants. Was Smith escaping after killing his prisoners?

At least there was a chance of preventing this—if he could get to the telephone in time. He noted the number of the car and hurried on after it.

He was breathless when he emerged from the fields on to

The House of Sleep

the road near Fairbridge. He stumbled into the village. A public call box was outside the Post Office.

He rang frantically and lifted the receiver. As soon as he put it to his ear, a dreadful squalor flashed across his mind. And when his repeated ringing brought no reply, the suspicion was confirmed. The line was completely dead. The wires had been cut.

Emerging from the box, he stood for a moment hesitating. He remembered noticing the wires yesterday when he and Paul had changed their clothes in the plantation. There was only the one telephone in Fairbridge. The next would be at the tiny village two miles back along the road.

He set off running again. Hardly had he passed the first bend, when he saw the lights of a car again. Once more he dived behind a convenient hedge. The car was approaching slowly from the direction of Ipswich. It was swerving about in the road. And Henry realized with an unpleasant shock that it was searching for something.

He crouched lower behind the hedge. As the car went slowly past he saw its number. It was the car that had driven away from Eldon Grange. He knew what had happened. It had travelled swiftly several miles down the road so that the telephone wires could be cut. And now it had returned—to search for him!

What should he do now? In all probability he would not find an intact telephone for some six miles. If he ran on the road the car would be sure to find him eventually. His only hope was to make his way through the fields.

All that distance! Through unknown country, on a dark moonless night! Henry knew that it would take him hours. Hours—when every minute counted!

And another idea suddenly occurred to him. Smith evidently had not left Eldon Grange. He was still there, with his company of murderers perhaps waiting for the submarine to be raised, thinking themselves safe because Henry could do nothing.

Do nothing? With a revolver and three high-explosive bombs in his pocket! Do nothing? God! Henry swore to himself as he turned abruptly and dashed back across the fields. Do nothing! He'd show the evil empire!

Fully convinced of murder, and Paul were dead by now, he had lost all sense of proportion. For the second time in his life he was seeing red. He was too late to help his friends, he told himself as he stumbled along, sobbing and breathless. But at least he would exact a terrible vengeance.

He must not be seen by the searching car. When he reached the road to the Grange he kept behind the hedge and hurried forward, trying to make as little noise as possible.

A vague idea was fermenting in his feverish brain. He remembered Paul Grendon's plan of reaching the garden by swimming across the inlet. He also remembered that last resource—of blasting a way into the house by means of the bombs.

He had reached the branch of the road when he heard a car approaching. Dropping flat behind a bush, he hugged the ground, trusting that the blazing headlights would not discover him. The car whizzed past without hesitation. Raising his head he saw that it was not the one which had been searching for him.

COULD it be the police? He watched the car approach the front gate of the house and stop. A man came out and, after a word with the occupants, opened the gate. The car passed through. It occurred to Henry that The Owl had come to gloat over his success.

The possibility spurred him to greater haste. He ran forward to the wall round the garden. Untying his parcel of poisoned meat, he threw the portions over the wall. He could hear faint scuffling movements in the garden beyond, and an occasional growl. A wild delight surged through him at the thought that the dogs had found the meat.

As he crept swiftly along the wall toward the water edge, he realized that there was something doing in Eldon Grange. There were lights about, and vague sounds of movement. Occasionally he heard a whistle.

When he reached the water he saw the reason for the activity. The water was no longer formless, hidden in the black shroud of night. The darkness was pricked by several pin-points of light which glinted on wet smooth metal.

The submarine was just breaking surface!

As Henry watched, a bright light sprang up on the vessel, disclosing the expanse of deck still awash. The hatch to the conning tower opened and a man in a diver's suit climbed out.

So this was the idea! This was how The Owl and Smith were going to escape! Not so long as Henry was alive! He

stepped into the water. Paddling through it, he reached the shore at the other side of the wall, and ran toward the submarine. As he drew near it, he pulled one of the bombs from his pocket.

Careless as to whether he was seen or not, he waited until he was close to the gray sinister vessel. Then, extricating the safety pin, he tossed the bomb through the open hatch.

There was a moment of tension. Then a dull muffled roar. The lights on the submarine went out. Henry could not see a wink. But he could hear the gurgles of the water as it poured into the conning tower, and he laughed aloud in wild exultation.

Footsteps came running. He dodged through the shrubbery. Somewhere a dog was howling, but he ignored it. He was in the garden of Eldon Grange now, revolver in one hand, another bomb ready in the other. Heaven help anyone who blocked his path!

Twisting and turning, he zig-zagged through the garden toward the house. He reached the broad level terrace in front of it. Two cars were parked near the door. This stood open, and Henry could see the figure of a man silhouetted against the light in the hall.

He withdrew the pin on the second bomb and tossed it into the doorway. There was a flash of light, a terrific crash, and the front of the house seemed to crumple into ruins.

Then a quick footstep sounded behind him. Something descended with terrific force on his head.

He passed out. . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

BEHIND their barricade in the bedroom at Eldon Grange, Paul Grendon and Aileen Porter waited, looking at one another in silence, wondering what was going to happen. They knew enough of Smith to be certain that he would evolve some plan for dealing with the situation.

"He'll be sure to get us somehow, won't he?" murmured Aileen at last.

"If he has time," agreed Paul. "It all depends on whether Henry got my message. If he did, we should be able to hold out until he brings the police."

He broke off at a shuffling sound in the corridor outside. The next moment a streak of light appeared under the door and a strong smell of burning drifted into the room.

"They're trying to smoke us out," he said, laying a hand on Aileen's shoulder. "It's going to be rather unpleasant, I'm afraid. There's some water here, isn't there?"

"In a jug on the wash-stand."

"Good. Let's tear some strips from the sheets, soak them, and fasten them round our mouths. You'd better attend to Uncle Bob, too."

The glow under the door increased. Occasionally a yellow flame would travel through the narrow space and lick at the wardrobe. The smoke in the room grew denser, making them cough in spite of their improvised respirators.

With his revolver Paul broke the window, knocking the glass away completely. But this did not improve the situation much. The shutters outside fitted closely. They were steel and he could not move them. The smoke grew thicker, burning their eyes, choking them.

"If this goes on much longer," he whispered, "we shall have to make a dash for it."

In despairing silence now they fought against the acrid asphyxiating cloud. They had almost reached the limit of human endurance. Coughing and spluttering, Paul drew one of the bombs from his pocket. As he fingered the safety-pin, a sibilant hissing sound filled the room.

"My God!" he muttered. "The Owl's poison gas! I'd forgotten."

He dropped to the floor. Aileen collapsed beside him. A moment later the door crashed open and the wardrobe overturned. A light flashed into the room.

"That's good!" said a harsh voice. "Hold your breath, and collect the bombs if they really have any. Guns as well. You needn't bother about fastening them. They'll be dead in a minute."

A man advanced into the light of the torch and took Paul's revolver and the bombs. He searched Aileen and Robert Porter without result.

"Okay, Boss," he said.

Someone struck a match and lit the lamp.

Paul and Aileen, recovering from the temporary effect of the deadly gas, saw that they were caught. The corridor outside was filled with men. Just inside the door stood

The House of Sleep

CHAPTER XXVIII

an evil-looking creature holding a sub-machine gun trained on them. Beside him was a stranger.

This man was dressed in a dark suit with clerical collar. There was a very faint resemblance in his features to Jonas Hardaker.

"Well, well, Grendon!" he said. "You keep popping up." Paul knew that he was face to face with The Owl for the last time. And it seemed that The Owl had won—unless he could be kept in conversation until Henry arrived with the police.

"Yes," he agreed. "I'm glad to see you've come appropriately dressed."

"For what?"

"Your funeral, old chappie."

The Owl smiled grimly. "In a few moments," he said, "this machine gun will talk to you much more effectively than I can. Before that, I'd like to know which of my men has rattled. How did you get in here?"

"I came with the coal," Paul sat up, gently rubbing his ankle. "Sprained my ankle doing so."

"Where's your draper friend?"

"He's gone for the police. They'll be ever so pleased to see you," Paul was still playing for time. "I suppose you'd like to know how I discovered Eldon Grange?"

"I should very much like to know, but I'm afraid I haven't time to wait."

The Owl turned his head suddenly as the muffled roar of an explosion split the silence of the night.

"What's that?" he asked shortly. "See about it."

Two of the men in the corridor hurried away. There was a tense silence until they returned.

"The submarine, Boss!" gasped one of them. "She's sunk! Ginger says a bomb—"

"Good old Henry!" said Paul. "He does make a proper job of a thing when he—"

"See that the cars are all filled up with petrol," snapped The Owl. "We'll have to get away in them."

A trace of anxiety was showing in his face as he turned back to the prisoners.

"I'm afraid I must leave you now," he said hurriedly. "But this time, Grendon, I'll make sure that you don't follow."

"You haven't made sure of the bonds, have you, old chappie?"

"Not yet. But they'll keep. You won't."

The Owl made a signal to the machine gunner. At this moment a terrific explosion shook the house, and the men in the doorway were almost thrown from their feet.

"Good old Henry!" repeated Paul. "He was still caressing the sprained ankle. 'He's at it again!'"

The Owl's face was contorted with rage.

"Shoot, damn you, shoot!" he cried.

THE man with the machine gun had been thrown off his balance when the house shook. Recovering, he trained the gun again on the prisoners, and his fingers closed round the trigger.

Paul acted so quickly that his movements could hardly be observed. The small pin-fire revolver, which had been secreted in his sock, appeared in his hand as though by magic. Two shots rang out in rapid succession. The machine gun belched flame toward the ceiling for a second, then clattered to the floor as it slipped from the nerveless fingers of the man who had held it.

A small round hole had appeared in the centre of The Owl's forehead. The rage died from his face, leaving an expression of acute surprise. He slowly toppled backwards and fell across the doorway.

The men in the corridor raised their guns. A hubbub broke out beyond them. Revolvers cracked viciously, and there were shouts of "Police!"

As they turned in confusion to see what was happening, Paul sprang to his feet. Snatching the machine gun from the floor, he trained it on the corridor.

"Put your hands up!" he cried. "The game's over!"

There was a scurry of feet, and police crowded along from the top of the stairs. A moment later Dransfield strode into the room.

"Hello, Jim!" said Paul, swaying unsteadily. "Punctual as usual!"

SMITH and those of his men who were alive had been taken away before Henry was found. He was lying on his face in the garden, unconscious, with a large wound at the back of his head.

They carried him into the house and laid him on a settee in the hall. Aileen took charge of him, fussing round with hot water and bandages.

"The little chap saved the situation," murmured Paul, looking down affectionately at the pale dirty face. "If he hadn't got word through to you—"

"He didn't," said Dransfield. "The wires were cut."

"Then how did you—"

The Inspector grinned, pulling at his heavy mustache.

"I did a little planning on my own, Paul," he confessed. "After you'd told me about your success in listening in, it occurred to me that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a man on the telephone exchange at Ipswich. I've had one listening all the time. He overheard Smith telling The Owl that you were caught, and The Owl's decision to come down straightaway. He phoned me at once."

They went upstairs to the bedroom. The body of The Owl still lay across the door.

"Sorry I couldn't hand him over to you, Jim," Paul stood looking down at the dead man with a certain respect. "But you know how it was."

"Yes," agreed Dransfield. "And perhaps he's safer where he is than behind bars."

Robert Porter was lying motionless on the bed. His eyes were closed, but he opened them as Paul and Dransfield approached.

"The Owl—is dead?" he asked feebly.

"Yes."

"Then I would like to tell you—I would like to confess. This trouble has all been due to me."

"Don't worry about that now, old chappie. Wait until you are—"

"I want to get it off my mind," Porter moved uneasily on the bed. "That burglary a year ago was faked. I'd stolen the bonds before that. Stolen them and left forged copies in the safe. I arranged with Wilson to fake a burglary, and to destroy the forged bonds as soon as they were in his possession. He told me that he had done so. Instead, as you know, he hid them, probably intending to blackmail me later."

"When you found them, I felt that I had to do something. If The Owl had discovered that they were forgeries, he would have killed us all. And so I—I—"

"You took them away and destroyed them?"

"Yes. I haven't told anyone. Yesterday, when Smith tortured me, I wouldn't tell him. But I'm glad to tell you now, and I—I'll be glad to take my punishment. . . ."

Porter's voice trailed away into silence.

Paul nudged Dransfield and drew him aside.

"The poor devil's suffered enough," he murmured. "But he'll have to take his trial, I suppose?"

"I'm afraid he will."

"The little lady'll be very cut up. No need to tell her about it just now, is there?"

"None at all," agreed Dransfield. "Crimes! To think that we've had all this bother over some bonds that weren't!"

They went downstairs again. In the hall, they found that Henry was just recovering, while Aileen leaned over him anxiously.

"You haven't tried his special method of bringing people round, have you?" asked Paul.

Aileen turned to him quite seriously.

"I've heard you say something about that before," she said. "What is it?"

"Well, when you were drugged he tried a rather curious way of awakening you."

"Go on."

"Remember how the Sleeping Beauty was awakened?" Aileen flushed. Then, defiantly, she gathered Henry's head into her arms and pressed her lips to his.

He opened his eyes. An incredulous wonder sprang up in them.

"Aileen!" he whispered. "Thank God! Are you—are you—"

"I love you, Henry!" she murmured.

He closed his eyes again happily.

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